



FINAL REPORT

The Blue Shield of California Foundation Study

A large green rectangular graphic with a faint grid pattern and ghosted text in the background. The ghosted text includes "How many times have", "Al-", "ways", "4%", "9%", and "Never 87% 13%".

**“Breakthrough
Men's Community:
Lessons Learned
and
Future Directions”**

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Never 87% 13%

Blue Shield of California Foundation Grant #: 1499687
August 2008

A study of the first twenty years
of the

BREAKTHROUGH
MEN'S COMMUNITY

Lessons Learned and Future
Directions

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Breakthrough Men's Community: Lessons Learned and Future Directions

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Executive Summary

OVERVIEW OF BREAKTHROUGH MEN'S COMMUNITY

The Breakthrough Men's Community (BMC) consists of the more than 600 graduates of the Breakthrough program. Its central activities are the staffing and running of the Breakthrough program, which consists of two extended workshops - Breakthrough 1 (BT1) and Breakthrough 2 (BT2) – which together total 33 weeks and involve weekly 3-hour meetings and several day-long or weekend retreats. In addition, the small, self-led groups (also known as Breakthrough 3), which form after participants graduate from BT2, are supported by the wider community; information is circulated through a newsletter and a weekly e mail set of announcements; special events (guest speakers, workshops) are organized regularly; and there is an annual Summer Retreat, attended each year by about 90 men.

Breakthrough saved my life.
I live instead of coping.

The fundamental purpose of Breakthrough is neatly captured in its vision statement: *Our vision is to create community by championing the full humanity and gifts of men and all people.* In other words, the program aims to strengthen the hearts and minds of men so they can re-evaluate what it means to be fully human and male and to create and live the life they want.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

In 2006, the Breakthrough Men's Community solicited and received funds from the Blue Shield of California Foundation in order to conduct an assessment of the program as it passed its twentieth year of operation. The purpose was to characterize the impact of its signature workshops and other community activities and identify what has been especially successful and powerful; to create an organizational development plan for the future; and to identify the aspects of the program most effective in addressing issues of domestic violence. This grant enabled Breakthrough to explore the impact of its programs in some detail, through a series of individual interviews, a 20-page written survey completed by 164 graduates, and a sequence of focus group interviews. These activities, conducted between October 2006 and March 2008, produced a bank of data which is presented and explored in the full report. In addition, an external consultant facilitated a series of discussions leading to a document outlining future possibilities for the growth and development of the organization.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF PARTICIPANTS

The survey participants form a relatively homogeneous population: of the 164 respondents, 88% are white; the average age is 54; and 69% have attended college. Not unexpectedly, the respondents are generally more involved in the Breakthrough community: one third had at some point volunteered to be part of a workshop teaching team; 82% are or have been part of a self-led group; and 68% had attended at least one summer retreat. There were also commonalities in terms of motivation for joining the program: the great majority cited partner relationship issues as their primary concern; this was followed by lack of self-esteem, isolation and depression. Only 9% identified domestic violence as a reason for joining, while far more (30%) expressed a concern about issues of anger. Clearly, this population turns their anger inward, with the resulting isolation, depression and low self-esteem.

I had been a pastor for many years, but it was through Breakthrough that I found the spiritual and emotional healing that I had always been seeking.

ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT OF THE BT CURRICULUM

The survey respondents nominated the following as the most important *concepts* in the curriculum: boundaries, inherent nature, self-esteem and active listening. They represent the core notions of identifying and valuing one's true nature, protecting it with a healthy boundary system, genuinely connecting with people through effective communication skills, and using the boundary concept to avoid taking on the distress or shame of others. These were followed by the bundle of concepts which permit the men to separate their adult reality from the distress and patterns they carry from childhood, including the inner child (or "small boy"), the adaptive child, and carried feelings. It was also clear that BT graduates value the healing component of the course which enables them to identify and describe their boyhood traumas, discharge the feelings associated with them and then accurately identify their present time feelings and express them appropriately.

"...before Breakthrough, the charge would be about everything in my life focused in on this particular issue. The rage had nothing to do with the topic of my anger at the time. Breakthrough helped me learn how to discharge the charge, and move on. Don't have to bring on all the other carried rage. Now, I have a charge, I share it, and it is discharged. It is on topic, and not about the myriad of other shit that you spew."

Active listening skills were prized above all else as the most important *tools* that respondents learning through Breakthrough, followed by the use of boundaries and the ability to deal with issues and discharge feelings appropriately through peer interactions (known in Breakthrough as "sessions"). Also valued was the tool of affirmations, which combines with boundaries and the idea of inherent nature to facilitate increased self-esteem and the establishment of an adult reality.

ASSESSMENT OF THE DELIVERY OF THE BT CURRICULUM

Of the various pedagogical components of the Breakthrough program, the following were nominated as having the most significant impact:

- Demonstrations: after the presentation of new material in a given meeting, one of the teaching team takes a volunteer through the day's exercise in which the new concepts and tools are processed and practiced;
- Small group sessions: after the demonstration, the participants break into groups of three,

Breakthrough radiated hope and relief from pain. It told truth to me -if I was willing to risk opening up, it would promise to be a safety net, and I could break my silence and isolation. I got LOVE, I got witnessed, I was part of a communal creative event.

- with a teaching team member to facilitate as each of the three men works through the set exercise;
- The all-day and weekend retreats; these extended meetings were viewed as adding particular depth and intensity to the two Breakthrough workshops;
- Listening exercises; these are introduced early in BT1 and practiced throughout the program.

Overall, respondents felt that the teaching team members, volunteers who support the presenter (workshop leader) and conduct the small group sessions, have a vital role in the success of Breakthrough. They also acknowledged that the group became a powerful healing environment, as the men built meaningful connections and recognized the universality of their feelings and processes.

GENERAL IMPACT OF BREAKTHROUGH

One word best captures the impact of Breakthrough: **transformative**. 91% of survey respondents used the word “enormous” or “considerable” to describe the extent of the impact that Breakthrough has had on their lives.

Men described powerful shifts in both attitudes and behaviors as a result of their involvement with BMC. The following categories emerged from the survey respondents’ descriptions of the nature of this transformation:

- Developing self-esteem, self-confidence, self-knowledge.
- Moving from isolation, hopelessness, and depression to feeling connected, hopeful and empowered.
- Ability to identify and express emotions.
- Ability to deal with issues of anger.
- Overcoming fear.
- Ability to separate own feelings and responses to those of others (i.e., *boundaries*).

Extent to which Breakthrough has brought about change in your life?

	#	%
None	0	0%
Very Slight	4	2%
Some	11	7%
Considerable	66	40%
Enormous	83	51%
Considerable or Enormous		91%

When asked for specific examples of changes in their behavior, men cited most frequently *behaviors with spouse or significant other* (27 responses), followed by *behaviors with other men* (17 responses), *expression of feelings* (17 responses), *taking care of myself* (15 responses), and *expressions of adult love* (14 responses).

IMPACT ON ANGER AND VIOLENCE

As anticipated, Breakthrough men were much more inclined to internalize their anger, as opposed to expressing their anger in the form of either verbal or physical abuse. The most common responses to conflict identified by the men were withdrawal, isolation, passive-aggressive behavior, and depression. In addition, respondents identified alcohol, drug and sex

	Pre-BT		Post-BT	
	#	%	#	%
Suppress	58	35%	7	4%
Always Inappropriately	6	4%	0	0%
Mostly inappropriately	45	27%	0	0%
Sometimes each	28	17%	16	10%
Mostly appropriately	24	15%	117	71%
Always Appropriately	2	1%	15	9%
Mostly or Always Appropriately		16%		80%

addictions, as well as workaholism as primary responses to conflict. However, there was a significant transformation pre- and post-Breakthrough in the respondents’ ability to express anger appropriately. While only 16% of respondents claimed that they expressed anger “mostly” or “always” appropriately before Breakthrough, that number increased to 80% post-Breakthrough.

Respondents identified the following concepts from Breakthrough as central to their increased propensity for the appropriate expression of anger: 1)

Understanding the source of anger in childhood trauma, shame, and carried feelings; 2) Self-esteem and self-worth; and, 3) Understanding feeling states, and being able to separate one’s own feelings from the feelings of others.

IMPLICATIONS FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Breakthrough is clearly focused on facilitating a deep healing process for men, which is distinctly different from the work of most anger management and domestic violence classes.

The data point to three aspects of growth and awareness which are essential:

- Reinforcing men's own internal sense of self-value, self-esteem, and the goodness of their "inherent nature;"
- Exploring the source of men's pain and distress in early hurts and childhood trauma, and discharging the volatile load they carry through life; and,
- Helping men to understand their feeling states, to be able to express their feelings, and to know that feelings are separate from their current reality and sense of self.

This Breakthrough curriculum provides men with the tools and knowledge to make this growth and awareness possible. The data point particularly to active listening skills, boundaries, and discharge techniques as essential elements to the process.

Community-Building

Building community is an essential component of this deep healing process. The course itself becomes a powerful support community for the men as they go through the program. In addition, graduates are encouraged to continue with self-led groups and check-in partners; to "give back" as members of the teaching team; and, to engage in additional community activities to support the on-going growth of the men and the community (summer retreats, additional workshops, etc.).

...that was huge for me, to have a witness not only to my pain, but to my healing. I've been to numerous anger management, domestic violence courses, and have successfully completed them all, and have re-offended on every occasion. I didn't get that there. I got sitting around in a room of broken men, with no direction, with no healing, with a lot of statistics, with a lot of shoulds and shouldn'ts, and how to try and curb your temper, rather than trying to deal with what is underneath, where that anger is...

FUTURE POSSIBILITIES FOR BREAKTHROUGH MEN'S COMMUNITY

The organizational development working group identified the following priorities for BMC to take in its journey to support men in living healthy and full lives and in supporting the same for their communities. They are presented in order of relative priority, as identified by the working group:

- Institutional Capacity
 - Intellectual Capacity
 - Management Capacity
 - Physical Space
- Curriculum Development
 - Documentation for Practitioners
 - Clarification of Purpose
 - Technical and Popular Documentation
- Community Membership
 - Membership Working Group
- Specialized Content
 - Short-term Opportunistic Development
 - Long-term Planned Development
- Geographic Expansion

My spouse was most often the recipient of the effects of my suppressed anger and low self-esteem. This was mostly expressed in irritability and withdrawal. Our time together is now much more open and loving.

I look forward to Fridays [the day after he comes back from Breakthrough]. It is like someone has plugged in the lights on the Christmas Tree.
-a spouse speaking on the impact of Breakthrough

Chapter 1. Introduction

This chapter sets out to orient the reader of this report in four ways: firstly, with a brief account of how this report came about; secondly, with a sketch of the Breakthrough program; thirdly, with a brief overview of the contents of the report; and finally, with guidelines for reading and interpreting what follows, especially by introducing a number of technical terms and setting up a system of abbreviations.

WHAT IS THIS REPORT?

In 2006, the Breakthrough Men's Community solicited and received funds from the Blue Shield Foundation in order to conduct an assessment of the program as it passed its twentieth year of operation. The purpose was threefold: (1) for Breakthrough to assess the impact of its signature workshops and other community activities and identify what has been especially successful and powerful; (2) for Breakthrough to create an organizational development plan for the future, basing proposals for moving forward on the key lessons of the past; (3) and for Breakthrough to identify the aspects of the program most effective in addressing domestic violence, and suggest strategies most appropriate for dissemination of these strategies more widely throughout the domestic violence prevention community. With reference to this third goal, we note here that it was acknowledged at the outset by the Blue Shield Foundation that Breakthrough was not designed specifically as a Batterer Intervention Program (BIP), nor is it directly comparable with such programs. In fact, the great majority of the men who have voluntarily enrolled in Breakthrough over the past 20 years did not have a history of reckless, angry behavior or violence. On the contrary, our data will show that they tended very much to suppress any tendency to overt expressions of anger or violence, resulting in isolation, depression, and a variety of addictions.

This grant from the Blue Shield of California Foundation (#1499687) has enabled Breakthrough to explore the impact of its programs in some detail, through a series of individual interviews, a 20-page written survey completed by 164 graduates, and a sequence of focus group interviews. These activities, conducted between October 2006 and March 2008, produced a bank of data which is presented and explored in the bulk of this report. In addition, an early summary of these data was made available to a group of Breakthrough men, led by the Founder and Director, Fred Jealous and the Chairman of the Board, Robert Weston. Their responses to and interpretation of the data led, through a series of discussions facilitated by an external consultant, Horacio Trujillo, to a report outlining future possibilities for the growth and development of the organization. This report appears as Chapter 8 of this document.

WHAT IS BREAKTHROUGH?

The Breakthrough Men's Community (BMC) consists in principle of the more than 600 graduates of the Breakthrough program. In practice, some 450 are still in contact with BMC and an estimated 200 are particularly active. BMC is led by the Founder and Director, Fred Jealous, while the day to day running is in the hands of the Operations Director, Lee Garland. The central activities are the staffing and running of the Breakthrough program, which consists of two extended workshops, Breakthrough 1 (BT1) and Breakthrough 2 (BT2). In addition, there are a number of other activities that are supported by the BMC. These additional activities include the

following: small, self-led groups (also known as Breakthrough 3) which form after participants graduate from BT2; information and training sessions for BT graduates wishing to join a teaching team; information and orientation sessions for men interested in joining BT; writing and circulating a newsletter and a weekly e mail set of announcements; special events (guest speakers, workshops); and an annual Summer Retreat, attended each year by about 90 men.

The fundamental purpose of Breakthrough may be quoted from the introduction to the teaching manual:

"[Breakthrough] is designed to encourage men to reevaluate what it means to be human and male at this time in human evolution. The workshops [BT1 and BT2] lead to the creation of a self-supporting men's community. The purpose of this community is to provide support and inspiration for men to create the lives they really want - outside the inhuman conditioning of the male role - for themselves, other men, women, and children."

This is also neatly captured in the BT vision statement: *Our vision is to create community by championing the full humanity and gifts of men and all people.*

The basis of Breakthrough, then, is a 33 week sequence of two extended workshops, Breakthrough 1 (17 weeks) and Breakthrough 2 (16 weeks). Each program involves a weekly three-and-a-half hour evening meeting, two one-day (Saturday) retreats and one weekend retreat. In the current system, groups of 20 to 25 men are enrolled in a new program at three points each year, January, May and August. Each group is led and facilitated by a paid lead teacher (or pair of teachers), who is supported by a teaching team of 12 to 15 volunteer Breakthrough graduates. The lead teachers take responsibility for presenting the new material each week and for conducting demonstrations in front of the whole group. A typical meeting is roughly structured as follows:

- a warm-up activity, permitting participants to reflect on the most recent material and on their progress over the intervening seven days;
- a formal presentation of the day's new material;
- some discussion of the day's new material, including the opportunity to ask questions;
- a demonstration with one man, showing how the new concept or tool is operationalized;
- business and announcements;
- after a break, small groups (3 participants, 2 teaching team members) repeat the exercise seen in the demonstration, with each participant receiving equal time and attention;
- the whole group reassembles for a closing and reminders about tasks to be completed before the next meeting.

Typically, other activities are scattered through the meeting as time permits; these include singing, poetry reading and physical activity (stretching or movement).

OVERVIEW OF THE REPORT

The first chapters provide important background information to the study. Chapter 2 documents the history and evolution of the Breakthrough Men's Community. Chapter 3 reviews recent developments in the domestic violence prevention field, especially with regard to studies examining the effectiveness of Batterer Intervention Programs (BIPs). Chapter 4 describes the methodology used in the study.

The findings of the survey and the focus groups are presented together in Chapter 5. Chapter 5.1 presents the demographics and motivations of the men for joining BMC. Chapters 5.2 and 5.3 look at the content and teaching approach of the Breakthrough workshops, BT1 and BT2. Chapters 5.4 and 5.5 focus on the impact that the program has had on the men, in general, and with regard in particular to issues of anger and violence. Chapter 5.6 looks at the participation of the men in BMC, beyond the core workshops. As there was such rich material around the relationships of the men to their fathers and issues of parenting, we have devoted Chapter 5.7 to this critical topic. Additionally, the focus group with spouses and partners was extremely powerful, so we have presented these insights from this focus group separately in Chapter 5.8. The findings conclude with two brief chapters summarizing survey and focus group data on the men's recommendation for the future of BMC (Chapter 5.9), and the men's thoughts about the relevance of BT for domestic violence prevention (Chapter 5.10).

The final section of the report presents an overview of the findings and a discussion of their implications for the men, the domestic violence field, and for BMC. Chapter 6 discusses the impact of BT on the men. Chapter 7 looks at the implications of the findings for the domestic violence prevention field. Chapter 8, written by the organizational development consultant Horacio Trujillo, discusses possible future next steps for BMC.

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW TO MAKE SENSE OF THIS REPORT?

These notes may appear somewhat trivial, but are aimed at establishing maximum transparency from the outset. Therefore, in no particular order:

- the Founder and Director of Breakthrough, Fred Jealous, is referred to mostly as *The Founder*.
- the Operations Director, Lee Garland, is mentioned throughout as *The OD*.
- the Breakthrough Men's Community is abbreviated to *BMC*.
- When referring to the individual workshops, *BT1 and BT2* are used.
- When referring to the overall program (including BT1 and BT2), the term *Breakthrough* is used, often abbreviated as *BT*.
- Quotations from the written survey responses are unattributed and will be seen simply as
 Indented and in this font
- Quotations from the interview and focus group data are attributed by the name of the individual, where appropriate, or by the name of the focus group. The latter are abbreviated as follows: Breakthrough teachers (T); Educators and Allies (EA); Breakthrough men who are fathers with sons (FS); Breakthrough men whose primary motivation for joining Breakthrough was anger or violence (AV); Breakthrough men who have had little or no contact with the community since their graduation (LI); and the spouses and partners of Breakthrough men (SP). Such a quotation will be seen as, for example,
 Indented and in this font (SP)
- Quotations in text boxes are exclusively from the focus group interviews and are attributed to the particular group by the same set of abbreviations.
- “We” refers throughout to the authors of this report.

Finally, a glossary of terms that are commonly used by BMC is included in the appendix for additional clarity.

Chapter 2. A Short History of Breakthrough

A large part of this study concerns the lessons which have been learned from examining the impact of the Breakthrough program over the last twenty years. To place ourselves in the best possible position to analyze our data and uncover these lessons, it was necessary to get an understanding of the origins and development of the program and specifically of the factors involved in the growth of the community. This chapter sketches the key events, contributing conceptual frameworks and tools, and our understanding of the processes underlying BT's path to the present day. The material here is derived largely from four sources: *extended interviews* with Founder and Director Fred Jealous, with early participant, subsequent teacher and current Director of Operations Lee Garland, and with early participant and subsequent teaching team member Eric Barthel III; the June 2006 recording of an *informal conversation* between Fred Jealous and the workers and volunteers at the Monterey Rape Crisis Center; the *written materials* for the BT 1 and 2 workshops; and the writings of the various individuals and organizations which have been of influence in the work and thinking of The Founder and his Breakthrough collaborators.

OVERVIEW

Fred describes the vision of Breakthrough as "to create community by championing the full humanity and gifts of all men and women." The fundamental premise behind this vision is the belief that what we all have in common as human beings is more important than the particular social conditioning that we receive. Thus, *all* people, female and male, have a right to a life that honors their humanity and provides them with an opportunity to celebrate their gifts in the world. The mission of Breakthrough is therefore to work with men in such a way that they can be allies to each other and to women and children, honoring and contributing to the life of everyone.

In one of our interviews, the Founder responded to a request for an encapsulation of the overall goals of Breakthrough by explaining, first of all, that everything is relative: that the aim has always been for shifts in attitudes and behaviors, not for perfection. Breakthrough seeks to bring men to a better sense of their goodness, able to pay attention to their own inherent nature and to create a foundation for their decisions and actions, based on a more solid and authentic sense of self. At the same time, the program takes on the task of reducing fear, of reducing divisiveness, the thinking, for example, that women are safe, men are dangerous. In general, this is about creating the ability in men to more effectively separate reality from feelings, to develop and embrace some degree of emotional intelligence so that they can see where feelings fit in the whole scheme of things. Breakthrough is intended to be "a good beginning to a great journey." This beginning includes men becoming better listeners and better parents; and more effective in thinking about themselves, creating useful friendships, and making better choices about who is in their life.

In sum, the basic spirit of Breakthrough is that what we have in common as humans is more important than the social conditioning that we receive. Breakthrough's fundamental philosophy is that male role conditioning in mainstream American society is abusive, that boys are terrorized, and that this socially sanctioned abuse has to be addressed, at first indirectly and then head on. This restructuring of the male role leads to men reclaiming their hearts, strengthening

their thinking, and being available as capable and caring allies for each other and for women and children.

ORIGINS

Fred Jealous, the Founder of Breakthrough explained in an interview with us that his whole life had led up to Breakthrough. Understanding his motivation to start and develop this program means understanding his life story, beginning with a loving father who turned violent and the longing to resolve that. After college, a couple of years living and working in rural Turkey (a valuable opportunity to observe gender roles in a very different culture) and various teaching experiences, Fred ended up on the Monterey Peninsula in the early 1970's teaching in a program for Vietnam veterans. His early work in the 1970s can be characterized as participation in open-ended support groups for men. In Fred's estimation, these did not work as well as they could have because the men kept returning to their old patterns, ultimately reinforcing their isolation. The patterns of the male role too often led to either boring each other or irritating each other, both leading back into isolation. The lesson from this was that the work has to be structured and directed in order to lead to new insights and behaviors. Led by his love of teaching, Fred was excited (in an interview, he described this as "heaven") to work with men in a forum of his own design for exploring new ideas. With no institutional constraints, there is plenty of freedom, he notes, but you have to be effective and be able to develop new ideas quickly.

The feminist ideal of human equality was always, for Fred, one of the most hopeful indications of future possibilities. He reports having had contact with girls when growing up (more than most boys) and having escaped the rigid objectification of women common among adolescent boys. The role that he adopted in the women's movement to end domestic violence was to work with men who were being physically violent to women. During this time, Fred was active in statewide and national profeminist groups where he received lots of support and inspiration that were not available locally. The California Antisexist Men's Political Caucus and the National Organization of Men Against Sexism were two such important groups. Originally, he took it on alone (which is, after all, the typical male approach) and quickly learned two lessons: first, that every man who came to his program (Men's Alternative to Violence, or MATV) had been abused as a boy; that they were recreating the crime; that boyhood trauma is driving the train. Secondly, that this work cannot, as a general rule, be done alone in a one-on-one setting: it must be done in the context of a community of support that challenges the excesses of the patriarchal traditions. Men are too ingrained with the fear of being shamed for stepping outside of the traditional male role to take this on alone (this again is from our boyhood training). Two men in a room can certainly examine it, but they cannot take the needed change outside alone.

For Fred, it is a fundamental tenet that a community provides a non-threatening and actively supportive environment to encourage men to take risks. It is his view that isolating men who beat up women and then convincing them to not do it again does not address the underlying issues including the across the board nature of the problem; most men are in fact doing something similar, engaged in the ingrained role of being the dominator, whether through money, or emotional abuse, or other means. Looking back at these early workshops, Fred realizes what an overwhelming task he was attempting. He was not a doctor or a priest or a therapist, and his experience was teaching him that violence is, in fact, every man's problem. He needed to be doing this work as part of a team. As a result, he assembled a group of men who

were willing to be leaders. Most men who knew about MATV, however, still thought he was taking on too much.

Still, he persevered and got together a group of 8 or so men and said: “we are in this training until we are all ready to step forward as leaders in the fight against domestic violence.” This took six months. The end of MATV for Fred, then, lay in the need for training new leaders. He stayed with the organization for a period of time after that, but gradually withdrew and launched the new approach, aiming to create a program that would lead to a community culture in which men have more opportunity to thrive. He did this out of love for his father, for himself, for men, women, and children. On the other hand, he also had to deal with his own fears: the thought of working to connect men with all their goodness brought up his own homophobia; he experienced lots of self-questioning and anxiety about succeeding at such an undertaking. He even had nightmares about being attacked and shamed for having this alternative vision of men's souls.

Although this story partly begins with Fred's response to the Feminist movement, in the early years of Breakthrough the main foci were the growing understanding that the mainstream male conditioning was an abusive reign of terror and the need to build a community of support for men to change. Sometimes, according to Fred's account, things just happened and events took shape of their own accord as he responded to events and his own emerging beliefs. Although Fred had substantial support from feminist women, including his wife Ann, for his work to end male violence, the work of examining boyhood trauma and building a community of support was more ambiguous, and for many women too reminiscent of other exclusive male institutions. Women were appropriately focusing on women's empowerment, and for many, men were still regarded as the problem.

In short, the origins of Breakthrough lie in Fred's participation in men's support groups and his work with MATV from 1979 to 1985; this was followed by the transitional period leading to the workshop called *Options*, which started in 1987, becoming *Breakthrough* by the early 1990's. As we shall see, he was training with Pia Mellody at the same time, learning to use a child abuse model and then adapting it for men. Fred Jealous taught these workshops entirely by himself until 1994, when BT experienced considerable growth and a new instructional format emerged. This led, a few years later, to a handful of men stepping forward to themselves teach the Breakthrough workshops, releasing Fred to lead important curriculum updates and develop new alliances.

We now narrate these developments in more detail. Our analysis of the data from interviews and of written materials suggests four phases of development in the history of Breakthrough.

FOUR PHASES OF DEVELOPMENT

Phase 1: 1987 - 1994

In 1987, Fred Jealous moved from his leadership development work with Men's Alternative to Violence and started a new program, which, pursuant to his decision that boyhood trauma and violence were a problem common to all men, was open to all men. After an initial pilot program, he began to work with small groups of 6 men, taking two separate groups simultaneously through the first part (which became BT1) and then combining them for the second part (later

BT2) so that they would become a solid number to form a self-led group. Wanting to make the program available to all men, he offered a sliding payment scale, asking participants to pay what they found feasible within that range. The same policy exists in Breakthrough today, along with a scholarship program.

In the early part of this period, Fred was becoming familiar with the work of Pia Mellody and adapting her model of recovery from child abuse, including work on boundaries and adult reality for his men's groups. Mellody has long been a supporter of Breakthrough's work, has made resources available to BT, and has inspected and approved of new materials and curriculum.

Another important development in this period was the first contact with Charlie Kreiner (see below for details). In 1990, finding enough men (almost 40) for Kreiner to come to Monterey and lead the first Breakthrough summer retreat on the male role, a relationship began which continued through the rest of the decade.

Phase 2: 1994 - 1997

After the first half-dozen years, the demand for Breakthrough began to sharply increase. As the Founder was wondering how he might deal with larger groups, he was approached by some of the early BT graduates, asking if they could repeat the program. Taking advantage of this convergence, Fred responded to the graduates by offering the opportunity to repeat the program for free, as long as they were willing to facilitate small group exercises. Thus began the differentiation in the teaching team, with Fred as the teacher and the new small group facilitators becoming known as "educators" – a term intended to stress that these men were not counselors or therapists. Indeed, in these years, there was no formal training for educators, though with the help of two BT graduates, now educators, and an under-employed secretary at a local college, the first binders of organized materials (curriculum outlines, worksheets for individual exercises, information packets, and other resources) were created and first put to use in 1995.

Fred oversaw the expansion of the program with great caution and, in retrospect, is satisfied that there were very few missteps in the development of Breakthrough. The numbers grew rapidly, however, with the largest group (in 1995) reaching 55. This was subsequently judged to be too large and it was felt, for example, that men who had experienced sexual abuse could not possibly be comfortable in that environment.

It was at this time that Breakthrough moved from being simply a program to becoming a community as well. In one of his interviews with us, the Founder described the key characteristics of the BT community as it emerged at this time as follows: it provides opportunities to confront men's conditioning into the traditional male role and, in general, a safe place to do the work we need to do. By providing consistent expectations for each participant in terms of his relationships with other BT men, it creates an effective network to contradict men's isolation; and because of the community's commitment to continuing this work in the long term, and because of its non-hierarchical nature, the community can continue to grow without losing any of the safety and support it provides.

Phase 3: 1997 - 2004

The crucial aspect of the next stage of development was the emergence of new Breakthrough

teachers. As men continued to graduate in larger numbers, there was a steady flow of volunteers for the educator role. A handful, early BT graduates and now with educator experience with several groups, were ready to take on the teacher role. This gave the program more flexibility and it was possible to run more than one group each year. These groups were limited to 24 men, and were led by a teacher (sometimes a pair) and a platoon of educators.

Although quality control was initially an issue, the new system worked well, with the Founder insisting on the importance of giving the men in the program clear directions, information that was well thought through, and effective tools. The program continued to be flexible and open to change as the curriculum continued to be revised, with Fred reworking the language almost every time he taught.

When we asked the Founder what makes a good BT teacher, he responded with the following catalogue. First, a belief in men's goodness; then, being willing to boldly challenge one's own homophobia; a commitment to give the men your best thinking about their goodness, and to give them tools to help goodness to be manifested. Plus, a readiness to give the men multiple extended opportunities to affirm their reality. A good teacher in Breakthrough will always give good information, and never lose sight of the fact that the workshop time is for the participants. This means setting up situations effectively so that exercises will go well. The Founder concluded that, in a sense, all exercises are the same: they are an opportunity to tell the truth in a simple way, with the man's value at the center. The teacher is providing the tools for everyone to do that.

The curriculum continued to develop, with Breakthrough 1 being revised again in March 2000, reflecting the teaching experience of the new teachers, Lee Garland and Philip Morgan, as well as other input from the teaching teams. After Charlie Kreiner's ninth retreat, his relationship with the community ended and the summer retreat became more open to input from the community: Fred recalls his conscious realization at the 2000 weekend, the tenth annual gathering, that the retreat and its content no longer centered on him or Charlie. Others were now being looked to for leadership, a willingness to share the risks and occupy central roles. The relief for him, he comments, was huge. A community of men had indeed been created.

PHASE 4: 2004 - Present

With the establishment of a Breakthrough office and the appointment of a Director of Operations, the Founder could begin to step back from the day-to-day running of Breakthrough and contemplate broader issues of the development of the community, as well as his eventual retirement. This period has also been marked by the search for a permanent facility for the community. This search continues, with Breakthrough currently housed in an excellent, though temporary location in Carmel, thanks to the generosity of a BT graduate.

The curriculum has continued to evolve, with Breakthrough 1 again revised in 2005 and BT2 the following year. The process began with a weekend retreat of the now larger group of BT teachers and continued with input from many BT men. The teaching situation had become more complex, with a new category – Allies – having been added for graduates who wished to attend, undertake the many support tasks (providing healthy snacks and water, setting up rooms, and the like), and join the small group sessions as supportive listeners. To move away from this three-

tier hierarchy (teacher – educator – ally), the leadership of BT workshops has been recently reconfigured, teaching teams being now composed of presenters and group leaders (the reader should note that this is a very recent development, and we largely use the original terms in this report and in the written survey). The work of presenters has been facilitated by the preparation of PowerPoint slide shows for each session, thus speeding up and streamlining the presentation of new material.

CONTRIBUTING THEORIES, CONCEPTS AND INDIVIDUALS

While there is clearly considerable overlap among these, the following catalogue is presented in roughly chronological order, suggesting the various correlations between the development of Breakthrough and the various influences which helped to facilitate that development. The Founder notes in the introduction to the new version of Breakthrough (2005):

"My contribution has been to present the material in a step-by-step process of my own design, adding my own thinking and the feedback offered to me by participants and teaching team members during the past 18 years."

From our analysis of the various sources and of the Breakthrough curriculum, and from our own experience with the program, we find this statement excessively modest. Fred has always been scrupulous in acknowledging his sources: if he takes an idea or a procedure or a quotation from, say, John Bradshaw, he always clearly expresses the origin and gives credit where it is due. However, the Breakthrough workshops are more than the skillful ordering of components drawn from here and there. To *concepts* taken from other material must be matched the processes for presenting and working with that concept. To *procedures* for discharging carried feelings or for practicing boundaries or listening skills must be matched appropriate content. We shall see in the presentation and analysis of our data (chapters 5.1 through 5.10), that the BT workshops represent a highly effective blending of concepts and procedures, logically sequenced and highly linked. On top of this, the curriculum is well paced, reflecting the Founder's (and, now, the community's) great willingness to pay close attention each time the course is presented and avoid both slow, dead spots with insufficient input and points of potential overwhelm when there is too much to absorb. Beyond the workshops themselves, we would point to Fred's vision of a community, with men as allies both to each other and to women and children, all connected in a supportive and vibrant community of fully alive humans. Without this vision, we suspect it would not have been possible to have assembled the catalogue of relevant concepts and procedures into a package as cogent and impactful as the BT workshops.

With this in mind, we now move to these various sources of influence and ideas.

Feminism

Fred Jealous acknowledges an important starting point for his work and thinking in the pro-feminist men's movement, back in the 1970's. He recalls the California Anti-sexist Men's Political Caucus and its motto: Surf against Sexism. This organization brought together men, straight and gay, from all over the state, men who admitted to being influenced by sexism (as, indeed, all men were and are) and to needing support and fresh ideas to create a new path. These men met together in support of ending sexism and, along with it, men's violence against women. What Fred drew from this experience was a good deal of inspiration, peer support and a chance

to confront and reduce his own homophobia. This committed group of men gave him the support and courage to begin his work with Men's Alternative to Violence (MATV), a direct approach to reducing men's violence against women.

Corresponding to a pro-feminist men's movement would be a form of pro-men feminism. A recent statement of this position is bell hooks' *The will to change: men, masculinity and love*, published in 2004 and a book which Breakthrough men, at Fred's urging, have read and discussed. Harking back to the earlier years of feminism, hooks notes how thinkers such as herself who "wanted to include men in the discussion" were labeled as "male-identified," and condemned as untrustworthy because they cared about what happened to men. However, hooks notes (page *xiii*) that as the movement developed, "the fact became evident that sexism and sexist exploitation and oppression would not change unless men were also deeply engaged in feminist resistance, yet most women were still expressing no genuine interest in highlighting discussion of maleness." This can be understood when one sees a couple of pages later how hooks characterizes the impact of patriarchy and male violence on women and children:

"This is the most painful truth of male domination: that men wield patriarchal power in daily life in ways that are awesomely life-threatening, that women and children cower in fear and various states of powerlessness, believing that the only way out of their suffering, their only hope is for men to die, for the patriarchal father not to come home. Women and female and male children, dominated by men, have wanted them dead because they believe that these men are not willing to change. They believe that men who are not dominators will not protect them. They believe that men are hopeless."

This is pretty bleak, but hooks describes how her own path of recovery has led her to a more hopeful place, believing now that it is more that men are afraid to change than that they are unwilling. She has seen how some men have looked at the ways that patriarchy keeps them from knowing themselves, from being in touch with their feelings, from loving. "To know love," she notes, "men must be able to let go the will to dominate. They must be able to choose life over death. They must be willing to change" (page *xvii*).

Other writers offer similar account of the problem and the possible solution. Jan Waldron (*In the country of men*) comments on the strong desire for the father's love: "The love of a father is an uncommon gem, to be hunted, burnished and hoarded. The value goes up because of its scarcity." Barbara Deming (whom bell hooks calls a "visionary feminist") writes about how some feminists came to have an understanding of men's suffering:

"I think the reason that men are so very violent is that they know, deep in themselves, that they're acting out a lie, and so they're furious at being caught up in the lie. But they don't know how to break it They're in a rage because they are acting out a lie - which means that in some deep part of themselves they want to be delivered from it, are homesick for the truth."

Also quoted by hooks is Kay Leigh Hagan, testifying how the good men in her life have made it difficult to continue hating the whole gender. She might have been writing about Fred Jealous: "Good Men . . . do not act in ways associated with typical men; they listen more than they talk;

they self-reflect on their behavior and motives, they actively educate themselves about women's realities by seeking out women's culture and listening to women." Hence, we like to think, the emphasis on listening in Breakthrough. Hagan continues, of these Good Men: "they practice enduring uncertainty while waiting for a new way of being to reveal previously unconsidered *alternatives to controlling and abusive behavior*" (our emphasis) and, perhaps most significantly, "they understand that male privilege prevents them not only from becoming *whole, authentic human beings* but also from knowing the truth about the world They offer proof that men can change" (hooks, 2004: 186-7) (again, our emphasis).

Because these are recent writings, we see Fred Jealous as a man ahead of his time. Acting the part of the Good Man, he sought out women, listened to them and asked what he could do to help: the answer, stop men being violent to women. At the same time, he spent time with other Good Men and learned that he could successfully challenge aspects of his own attitudes and behaviors. The result was Men's Alternative to Violence, then Options and finally Breakthrough.

Pia Melody

The appearance of Pia Melody as a leader in the recovery movement was timed perfectly in the development of Fred's work. Recognizing the significance of her descriptions and analysis of codependence, the various forms of child abuse, the nature of recovery and the importance of boundaries, Fred became committed to learning everything she had to say and teach. In addition to her workshops, lectures and tapes, full accounts became available in her books *Facing Codependence* and *Breaking Free* (both first published in 1989). These have been followed by *Facing love addiction* (1992) and *The intimacy factor* (2003). So strongly did this work speak to Fred that he describes how he would teach the first Options workshops with his notes of the Melody material in his hand. He regarded himself as a vehicle for these important concepts and tools: anything that could help men found a place in BT (which is one reason, he notes, that the curriculum is so crowded). In other words, the early years of Breakthrough were about becoming a master in teaching a men's version of recovery, one that included recovery from the excesses of installing the male role.

Pia Melody's original methodology was to have subjects (patients in a recovery center in Arizona for alcoholics and drug addicts) describe both their current problems and their childhood abuse. She came to realize that the latter were always the cause of the former, as a disease termed "codependence." This is best defined in terms of the five core symptoms: low levels of self-esteem, lack of functional boundaries, difficulty owning and expressing one's own reality, inability to take care of one's adult needs, and lack of moderation in experiencing and expressing one's reality. The major causality is in terms of failing to see the family of origin for what it was - dysfunctional, abnormal, abusive. Codependents are adults who continue to view that family as normal, their caregivers as good people, which means that their own feelings of discomfort with certain behaviors and events somehow make them less than good. "Also," she writes (*Facing Codependence*, page 6), "we apparently couldn't please our parents by being what we were naturally. This delusion that the abuse was normal and we were "wrong" locks us into the disease of codependence with no way out."

Melody unpacks the nature of abuse into various forms: physical, sexual, intellectual, emotional and spiritual are the major categories, with sub-types revealed in a more fine-grained analysis.

Similarly, the major tool for the healthy adult - functional boundaries - presents a similar breakdown: external boundaries (physical, sexual) and internal boundaries (intellectual, emotional, spiritual). Over the years, Fred and his collaborators have worked this material into a form finely tuned for the male adult codependent. Not surprisingly, as we shall see, Breakthrough graduates nominate boundaries as one of the key concepts and tools in the program.

Another example of an important concept in Mellody's work adapted into the BT curriculum is "carried shame." Unlike *healthy shame* (which functions to remind us that we are imperfect and human, just like everyone else), *carried shame* is the re-experiencing in present time of abuse in the past by a parent or other care-giver (see the glossary in Appendix I for definitions of these terms). It has serious consequences, damaging self-esteem, reinforcing a lack of boundaries and bringing about feelings of worthlessness. Breakthrough 1 has an important exercise in which the man gives back the shame (and the anger which often accompanies it) to the parent or care-giver who was its origin. This is important both in enabling the man to now have healthy relationships with others and also in preventing the shame from being passed to the next generation (see the notion of stopping the vicious cycle of contempt in the next section).

Alice Miller

In her classic text, *Prisoners of Childhood* (1981), Swiss psycho-analyst Alice Miller uses case studies of her patients in analysis to support the position that adults cannot find their true self, their authentic feelings and natural vitality without dealing with the abusive traumas of childhood. Unless attended to, she argues, the effects of child abuse are permanent, literally stored in the adult body. This position can be summed up in the following quotation from her writings (a quotation which is shared with BT participants as early as the second meeting of BT1):

"The truth about our childhood is stored up in our body, and although we can repress it, we can never alter it. Our intellects can be deceived, our feelings manipulated, our perceptions confused, and our body tricked with medication. But someday the body will present its bill, for it is incorruptible as a child who, still whole in spirit, will accept no compromises or excuses, and it will not stop tormenting us until we stop evading the truth."

The original German title of Miller's book translates literally as *The Drama of the Gifted Child*. Pia Mellody unpacks this term "gifted" (*The Intimacy Factor*, page 26) by quoting Miller's focus on "neither children who receive high grades in school nor children talented in a special way . . . [but] simply all of us who have survived an abusive childhood thanks to an ability to adapt even to unspeakable cruelty by becoming numb . . . without this 'gift,' offered us by nature, we would not have survived." From this, Mellody draws the message that "we recover our innocence through re-education: we regain knowledge of our inherent worth; we learn to accommodate to our perfect imperfection." This latter is, for Mellody, "the prime spiritual truth of our reality: that we are not perfect and that it is all right." Thus is the work of a European psychoanalyst absorbed and explicated by an American woman specialist in recovery (Mellody) and thence by a leader in men's recovery (Jealous).

There is a passage at the very end of *Prisoners of Childhood* which summarizes the impact of ceasing to evade the truth, ending the torment and dealing with childhood abuse:

"When the patient . . . has consciously, repeatedly experienced . . . how the whole process of his bringing-up did manipulate him in his childhood, and what desires for revenge this has left him with, then he will see through manipulation quicker than before and will himself have less need to manipulate others. Such a patient will be able to join groups without again becoming helplessly dependent or bound, for he has gone through the helplessness and dependency of his childhood in the transference. He will be in less danger of idealizing people or systems if he has realized clearly enough how as a child he had taken every word uttered by mother and father as the deepest wisdom. . . . Finally, a person who has consciously worked through the whole tragedy of his own fate will recognize another's suffering more clearly and quickly, though the other may still have to try and hide it. He will not be scornful of others' feelings, whatever their nature, because he can take his own feelings seriously. He surely will not help to keep *the vicious circle of contempt* turning." (Pages 112-3, our emphasis)

Although Miller is writing here of patients and psychoanalysis and using such technical terms as "transference," our data in this evaluation indicate that very much the same can be said of men graduating from Breakthrough. In particular, when responding to questions about their own father and about their own parenting behaviors, many commented on the importance of *breaking the cycle of abuse or violence*, which strikes us as very close to stopping *the vicious cycle of contempt*.

Re-evaluation Counseling

Re-evaluation Counseling (RC) is a widespread (in approximately 40 countries) and well-known organization providing individuals with an inexpensive opportunity for counseling and personal growth. Founded by Harvey Jackins and others in the late 1950's, RC aims to combat racism, sexism and other forms of oppression through a therapeutic method based on co-counseling, the co-operative sharing of time and attention between individuals. Once formalized, the methods have been spread through workshops to train co-counselors.

At the heart of RC are the processes of "discharge" – crying, laughing, trembling, and so on – which help to heal painful memories and feelings with the help and support of an empathetic listener. The expression "re-evaluation" refers to the subsequent re-analysis of distressing past events after the emotions around those events have been discharged and the individual can think about them more clearly, thus emerging with enhanced intellectual and emotional capabilities. The basis for the co-counselor skill set is non-judgmental listening – though the listener is also active in being permitted to facilitate both the discharge process and the subsequent search for clarity.

The official website (www.rc.org) describes RC as "a process whereby people of all ages and of all backgrounds can learn how to exchange effective help with each other in order to free themselves from the effects of past distress experiences." The theory behind this "assumes that everyone is born with tremendous intellectual potential, natural zest, and lovingness, but that

these qualities have become blocked and obscured in adults as the result of accumulated distress experiences (fear, hurt, loss, pain, anger, embarrassment, etc) which began early in our lives.” Because, the web site explains, the natural process of emotional discharge (through weeping, raging, laughing, shaking and the like) is often prevented or cut short by well-meaning caregivers (“big boys don’t cry,” and so forth), healing is prevented. Emotional discharge later in life can help take the individual back to their original level of emotional intelligence and social co-operation and permit them to act both in their own best interests and those of others, thus contributing to the fight for social justice. The basic mechanism is described as follows (again, from the RC web site): “two people take turns counseling and being counseled. The one acting as the counselor listens, draws the other out and permits, encourages, and assists emotional discharge. The one acting as the client talks and discharges and re-evaluates. With experience and increased confidence and trust in each other, the process works better and better.” Clearly the RC concept of co-counseling informed the small group exercises in the Breakthrough workshops and the signature "sessions" (now called “listening partnerships”) which BT graduates continue to use (normally in pairs) for their further healing and growth.

Also on the web site are the transcripts of talks by founder Harvey Jackins. One (from 1981) talks about the art of listening and confirms the basis of the system in listening and giving attention. There is a section titled “Our essential nature is fine” which is similar to the BT notion of *inherent nature*. Given the essential intelligence, co-operative spirit and goodness of people, it is generally true, Jackins suggests, that “simply to be listened to with interest and attention is enough contradiction. When was the last time anyone did that for you?” As our data will show, many BT men comment on this feature of Fred’s program: the enormous impact of being listened to with attention by another man.

Fred's reactions to the ideas and procedures of RC were mixed. The listening and discharging process was very effective in some ways but, in his opinion, in practice it put people too close to identifying with their emotions and placed too much emphasis on the discharging. One very important element lacking, for Fred, was the concept of boundaries and its systematic application. Clearly, though, the significance of listening and releasing feelings associated with old hurts had an impact on his own thinking and on the framework for the BT1 workshop. With a few exceptions, in the early years, what men in the BT community knew of the RC approach came from the retreats led by Charlie Kreiner.

Charlie Kreiner

This part of the history becomes a little complicated because of the role of Charlie Kreiner, who was at one time a participant in RC, but became an independent leader outside the organization. Charlie was the founder and director of the Institute for Diversity Education in America (IDEA), based in Connecticut. For over thirty years, he was an independent educator, activist, consultant and counselor on issues of human liberation and social oppression. His work took him to many places around the country and the world, and brought him to Breakthrough at a relatively early point in its development.

Charlie's work on male conditioning and men's liberation was an important factor throughout the 1990's in the development of Breakthrough, as we saw in the chronology above. Fred first heard Kreiner speak in Seattle, at the national conference on Men and Masculinity, and decided that

here was a man who could give him significant support and resources, especially in terms of taking on heavily charged subjects like the challenging of the male role, homophobia and sexual obsession. Fred describes this as "making a container" of support for himself. The relationship led to the summer retreats and one immediate addition to the curriculum was the teaching of the self-led group skills in BT2. Subsequent targets of this collaboration were unpacking and addressing male role conditioning and the issue of sex. Kreiner provided illumination and support with this and his RC background was very helpful.

From the profusion of ideas, a clear picture emerged: BT1 is about boundaries, feelings, and the establishment of emotional literacy in a setting that challenged the isolation and the fearful competitive nature of the male role. Then, in BT 2, come inherent nature, the authentic self and learning how to validate and express that with the support of other men. While Breakthrough was still regarded as a program for strengthening men's hearts and minds, it became clear that healing could also follow, which was a great bonus. In fact, they came to see that healing is inevitable. Charlie used to say: "I want you to know how good you are even when you are having a bad day." In other words, it doesn't matter how you feel – it matters where your attention goes. All these ideas were enhanced through the Kreiner period. For example, the term "inherent nature" came from Charlie who had studied Buddhism, psychology and the nature of the real, authentic self. To this day, Fred associates inherent nature with Charlie, whom he describes as a master at helping other people challenge the power of their attachment to learned shame and the excesses of the male and female roles.

In the long run, the relationship between Breakthrough and Charlie Kreiner was productive in several ways: enriching and expanding the curriculum; establishing the pattern of the summer retreats; and providing the Founder with a powerful ally for a number of years. Eventually, by the turn of the millennium, the collective BT community had become a force to be reckoned with and was able to move forward under its own momentum. There is no question that Charlie Kreiner had made enormous and brilliant contributions. A lot of the material in BT around sexuality and the deconstruction of sexual obsession derives from his audacity in taking on this difficult topic. This aspect is remarkable, Fred suggests, in the whole world of men's work and psychotherapy. Fred summarized for us what he learned as a teacher from Charlie as follows: first, boldness, that he could be even bolder than he already was; second, permission, from watching Charlie work with men to enjoy them and fall in love with them more freely; and third, more confidence in trusting his own love and intelligence. Fred summarizes this last aspect as follows: "It's ok for me to jump off a cliff with you – we shall find the resources we need to float to the bottom and not crash." Finally, even though Charlie was always urging everyone forward at top speed to full liberation, Fred rather paradoxically learned from the collaboration that the slow, steady approach to building the BT program and community was the correct way to move forward.

Nancy Kline

Nancy Kline is an American-born author, teacher, and coach. She is the President and Founder of Time To Think, an international company specializing in leadership development and coaching. Central to her work is the theory and process known as *The Thinking Environment* and also the process of active listening. Her best known book is *Time to think: Listening to ignite the human mind*. The Time To Think program teaches participants in a company,

community or other group how to create Thinking Environments, so that everyone at every level of the organization can think for themselves. Elements of the approach include openly demonstrating respect, active listening and creative thinking skills.

Nancy Kline's ideas are currently found in the BT curriculum in the form of a couple of booklets, distributed to all participants. One of these, which she co-authored with Christopher Spence is *At least a hundred principles of love* (in fact, there are 115). This passage from the Foreword (page 2) indicates the close parallels with Breakthrough thinking:

“We know that freedom will be ours if we take up the challenge of knowing and loving ourselves, of daring to show our love to others—individually, in every group of which we are a part, and through the barriers the world has imposed between groups—and of fearlessly taking action to make our dreams a reality. We know this will involve getting to know each other well; that it will take patient, interested asking and listening to each other about each other's lives and histories, and to create environments in which solutions that are good for everyone can be born. We know that establishing freedom involves love at every level of our lives and building many personal relationships, each of which is part of the wider change. We know that at its core world freedom is a distinctly personal thing.”

The booklet is organized into three sections: first, the principles for loving ourselves; second, for loving each other; and third, for loving the world. A number of principles from the first section (Loving Ourselves) are highly isomorphic with the concept of inherent nature which is central to the work in the first weeks of BT2. For example (from page 5):

1. By nature we are thoroughly good, intelligent and desirable. It is only logical and natural then that we would love ourselves passionately and unconditionally.
2. The first step in establishing close, fulfilling and lasting relationships with others is to build the finest relationship with yourself. Knowing that you are the center of your life, you must become your own most cherished love.
3. Be gentle with yourself. Treat yourself at least as well as you have ever treated your dearest love and as you should always have been treated: with compassion, high expectations, forgiveness and delight. Only then can you treat others and the world well enough.
4. The degree to which we love ourselves is reflected in the goals we set and in the actions we take. Our goals should express our dreams and the things that make our hearts sing.

While on a much smaller scale than the Mellody and Kreiner influences and inputs, this is another example of the willingness of Fred Jealous and Breakthrough to make use of resources already in existence and to always acknowledge the source of such materials and ideas.

David Richo

After Fred Jealous and Charlie Kreiner worked out the curriculum piece about sexual obsession, in effect taking away sexual fantasy and masturbation from men (as acts of self-indulgence, comforting the inner child or little boy without ever addressing real needs in the present), the

Founder came to realize that there must be something to replace them. The work of David Richo, and specifically the framework of the 5 A's, has become that positive replacement. The purpose is to set up the possibility for real, functional behavior, ways of engaging with both women and men. As 90% of needs are non-sexual, one can double the number of people who can meet those needs by interacting with both genders in healthy and productive ways.

Richo has spent a lot of time editing and refining his language in order to produce his functional definition of love and his careful articulation of the steps leading to it. There is a clear development of thoughts from his 1991 book *How to be an adult* to the 2002 *How to be an adult in relationships*. The former deals with a good deal of material found in the BT curriculum: the nature of adult realities, dealing with fear, anger and guilt; and intimacy and the role of healthy boundaries. The latter moves on to the issue of the central behaviors in a functional adult relationship. *How to be an adult in relationships* is subtitled *The five keys to mindful loving*, and explicates these keys as the 5 A's: attention, acceptance, appreciation, affection and allowing. Employing this framework leads to establishing relationships on the basis of conveying to our partners and close friends this position:

I am paying close attention to you now.

I accept you as you are in this moment.

I allow you to be yourself.

I appreciate you for what you have been and are.

I have real affection for you, no matter what.

(See Richo 2002, page 46)

We note that the foundation of this position is *attention*, which incorporates the ability to be present in a relationship and to really listen. This enables one to see and hear the other person for who they really are, then to accept them on that basis; this then leads to appreciating those authentic qualities, developing affection for them and culminates in permitting those with whom we have relationships to be truly themselves all the time.

This material came as a wonderful gift for Fred, who had felt for a while that what Breakthrough was doing around this issue was not quite right; he told us he could feel the incompleteness of his own language in his body. David Richo came along with the solution. The first contact was made less than 3 years ago. Having read Richo's books, Fred requested a meeting and the relationship with Breakthrough has grown steadily ever since. The two planned and led together the BT Summer Retreat in 2007, giving 90 Breakthrough men the opportunity to work through the material in detail. We also had the opportunity to interview David Richo at that time: we found that he strongly endorses BT and regards it as work of high integrity. He described it as a great pleasure to work with Breakthrough men because they had such a strong grasp of the basic issues, because of their openness to new ideas, because of their eagerness to grow, and because of their ability to listen. Since the Summer Retreat, David Richo has twice returned to Monterey to lead one-day workshops for BT men and their allies in the community. A third is planned for October 2008.

In addition to the 5 A's, Fred has also found valuable Richo's work on anger and abuse, which led to his recent work on righteous anger. This concept, which Fred describes as men's main access to justice and self-esteem, is now a crucial element in the Breakthrough curriculum and features heavily in the weekend retreat in BT 2.

Anger and violence issues: the Blue Shield Foundation, James Gilligan

After his incorporation of a significant piece on anger into the Breakthrough curriculum, it seems quite natural for Fred Jealous to return to his starting point and again pay detailed attention to the issue of domestic violence. The next ally to appear for Breakthrough was the Blue Shield Foundation and the grant which made possible the evaluation activities described in this report. After this evaluation was launched, Fred undertook his usual search into the literature and was especially struck by James Gilligan's *Preventing Violence* (published in 2001), copies of which were distributed to all involved in the current project. Gilligan emphasizes strongly the causative links between abusive child rearing and violent adults. Secondly, he identifies homophobia as a key element in the mechanisms of the male role in general and of violent male adults in particular:

“The general principle here is very clear: anything that will reduce the artificial and exaggerated polarization of gender roles, and the irrational fear, hatred, and contempt felt and expressed towards homosexuals will help to prevent violence because they are among the main causes of violence – and not only, or even primarily, towards women or gays.” (Page 92-3)

The key point, moreover, is expressed in terms very familiar to Breakthrough men, that of shame:

“The theory presented here implies that it is not poverty, racism, sexism, or age-discrimination, as such, that actually cause violence. It is, rather, that each correlates with violence because each increases the statistical probability that individuals exposed to these social forces will be subjected to intolerable and potentially self-destructing intensities of shame, from which they do not perceive themselves as having the means of rescuing themselves except by violence . . .” (Gilligan 2001, page 66)

A fourth point in Gilligan's work that speaks directly to the rightness of the Breakthrough approach is in his chapter on how to create less violent societies. While covering a number of issues which would contribute (gun control, guaranteed employment, ending media violence, universally available free higher education), the central passages are about the importance of community, especially those where “the social structure and practices are deliberately designed to maximize the democratic and egalitarian nature of the community” (page 87). Several examples are cited, including the kibbutzim in Palestine and Israel, classless communities marked by “the virtually complete absence of violence, crime and delinquency” (page 88). As we shall see in chapters 3, 5.10 and 7 below, it is at the intersection of these four points – the seeds of adult violence in child abuse, the need to discharge carried shame, the serious challenge of homophobia and the crucial role of community – that Breakthrough may have something to say to the domestic violence community.

To explore this potential intersection of ideas and solutions, in our last interview with Fred, we listed the following goals for a Batterer Intervention Program and asked him to assess the Breakthrough workshops in these terms.

- a. Taking responsibility for one's behavior and remaining accountable.
- b. Understanding the effects of abuse.

- c. Learning anger management skills.
- d. Changing attitudes about power and control in relationships.
- e. Healing from violence and abuse.

Fred commented that goals a, b, d, and e are absolutely in synch with Breakthrough and its goals. He noted specifically the key relationship between a focus on childhood trauma (goal b) and the healing process (goal e). This insight has always been central to Breakthrough. The issue of learning anger management skills, however, is more complex. Fred would prefer the term “reducing abusive behavior” - both of oneself and of others.

What is missing from this list is the issue of shame (the pivotal cause of violence, remember, for Gilligan). For Fred, it should be at the top of the list. It is only believing in a man's goodness and noticing it over and over again that can help him climb out of that shame. If men do not learn to esteem themselves, it is very doubtful that goals a, d and e can be achieved. In other words, given the BT framework, the more a BIP is involved in shaming men into being non-violent, the less successful it will be in helping men to truly heal and transform.

SUMMARY

As we mentioned above, the Founder notes in the introduction to the new version of Breakthrough (2005):

"My contribution has been to present the material in a step-by-step process of my own design, adding my own thinking and the feedback offered to me by participants and teaching team members during the past 18 years."

We disputed this above as overly minimal. We return to the key point about the structure and pacing of the curriculum. While Pia Mellody and Charlie Kreiner were certainly very strong influences on Fred and on Breakthrough, it is clear from our data that the scaffolding and pacing of the two workshops have been achieved with great deliberation on the basis of twenty years of thoughtful reflection and review. We have encountered numerous comments that “they [the teaching team] anticipated my every need,” or that a certain topic was presented at exactly the right time. One of Fred’s principles is that the next step must never be too big; he has always asked the crucial questions: “Is this too much?” “Does this come at the right time?” Because of this careful and, in the last 10 years, highly communal approach, the material from the different sources catalogued here is now presented and practiced as a seamless whole. These are crucial contributions and as a consequence the Breakthrough curriculum is clearly stronger and more effective. We shall see below (especially in Chapters 5.2 and 5.3) comments from BT graduates such as the following:

I appreciated the abundance of information on so many topics and how professionally presented. It became obvious from the start that the information was well researched, refined and presented (verbally and written) so everyone/anyone could understand it, no matter what “learning style” the participant had. I came to appreciate the sequence of the information delivered so that each piece of information obtained had the potential to be used as a tool for subsequent information.

In sum, we would characterize the Founder's three key contributions this way: first, and of chief significance, the ability to structure and present an array of material in such a way that it is accessible to all men who participate in Breakthrough. Secondly, the willingness to engage in a process of continuous improvement, with teams of Breakthrough men being involved in repeated curriculum renewals. Thirdly, the unswerving dedication to the original vision of liberating men in order for them to become maximally helpful and supportive allies to women and children, as well as to each other.

In one of our interviews, Fred offered the following summation on the process and outcome of his work: "Breakthrough is a good enough program for men. After 20 years of lamentation and self-doubt, I feel like we have enough understanding – and it's refined enough now... Reclaiming the beauty of your soul is not a gimmick; it's real. As the level of awareness and understanding and intimacy increases on a community level, we become more effective, and the potential for meaningful growth increases as the time it takes grows shorter."

Chapter 3.

The Domestic Violence Prevention Field: Concerns over the Effectiveness of Batterer Intervention Programs (BIPs).

The Breakthrough Men's Community is clearly not a Batterer Intervention Program (BIP). Participants are not court mandated to attend, but rather sign-up as a result of either a personal decision, or a forceful recommendation by a family counselor or therapist. In addition, as the data will show (see Chapter 5.1), anger and violence is not the dominant reason that men give for joining Breakthrough.

However, for the study of Breakthrough to have some relevance for the domestic violence prevention community, it was important for us to understand the history of these BIPs their effectiveness, and the issues that they are encountering and addressing in working with perpetrators of domestic violence.

BACKGROUND

It was not long ago, that domestic violence was considered a private, domestic matter, to be left for families to address privately on their own. However, since the 1970s, domestic violence has entered the public realm, and has been recognized as a significant social and public health issue. Initial efforts have focused primarily on providing safe haven and support to victims and potential victims, while the domestic violence prevention community struggled with the question of what to do about the abusers? What to do with (or for) the men who use physical violence, coercion, intimidation, emotional and financial control, and the assertion of male privilege to dominate and control their partners?

In the late 1970s, a group of practices emerged, taking an anti-sexist, consciousness-raising approach to helping men change their abusive behaviors (Taubman, 1986). Given the power of the socialized male role, and the social support for violent abusive male behavior, it was recognized that these efforts were having to work against much of the socialization that men had learned about what is or isn't appropriate male behavior.

EMERGENCE OF MANDATED BATTERER INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

Over the past thirty years, most communities in the country have implemented mandatory arrest policies in cases of domestic violence. With the criminalization of domestic violence, a unique partnership between the criminal justice system and the mental health system has been formed, as states have sought more effective approaches to treating batterers, and addressing the causes of domestic violence. One common approach has been the emergence of mandated batterer intervention programs. In 1993, California passed AB 226, the "Domestic Violence Diversion Act." This law requires all individuals convicted of domestic violence to attend a 52-week, legally-approved batterer intervention program. California was just one of a number of states that moved to mandate batterer intervention programs during this period of time. By 1998, 31 states had state-wide or county standards guiding batterer intervention programs and 13 other states were in the process of drafting standards. Only six states did not have state-wide programs coordinating batterer intervention programs (Austin and Dankwort, 1999).

While the curricular standards for BIPs are far from unified, there is a common core of issues that most programs address. For example, AB 226 requires that programs address the following six topics: gender roles; male socialization; the nature of violence; dynamics of power and control; effects of abuse on children and others; and cultural and ethnic sensitivity.

APPROACHES TO WORKING WITH BATTERERS

Psycho-Educational Approach

The first program to work with male abusers was created in 1977. Today, there are hundreds of programs in every state (Babcock and La Taillade, 2000). In the past three decades, a variety of approaches to working with male batterers has evolved. The dominant model to emerge is a feminist, *psycho-educational counseling* approach, sometimes known as the Duluth model (Jackson S., et al., 2003; Babcock and La Taillade, 2000). In fact Florida and Iowa mandate that the state-certified batterer intervention programs must follow the general principles of the Duluth model. This approach is firmly grounded in principles of feminist theory, emphasizing the power of patriarchy and male dominance. It presumes that the socialized male role encourages men to be dominant and seek control in their intimate relations, and therefore justifies domestic spousal or partner violence. The approach recognizes that domestic violence does not result from individual personal or moral deficits, diseases, poverty or addictive behaviors. Rather:

Abusers act from a set of attitudes and beliefs about how men and women should relate in intimate relationships. In general, abusers believe that they have a right to enforce their will on their partners. This belief, rooted in sexism and misogyny, is supported and tolerated by the society in which we live, a society that has historically condoned the use of violence against women. (New York State Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence)

Researchers point out that the goal of these programs is clearly to re-educate the batterer, and not to heal the batterer. The Duluth-style programs take a very confrontational and shaming approach to men's abusive behavior, focusing on cognitive awareness, as opposed to the emotional world of the men. This focus on re-education emphasizes that men need to understand the abusive power of patriarchy, and make conscious decisions to move from behaviors of "power and control" to behaviors that are more collaborative, and form the basis of more egalitarian relationships (Babcock and La Taillade, 2000).

Critiques of the psycho-educational approach emphasize that the confrontational approach to re-education is self-defeating. Men are not highly motivated to invest in such a program, and rather, become "treatment-resistant." As Babcock and La Taillade point out: "teaching batterers to take responsibility for the abuse may have only limited effectiveness on its own because it tends to shame and guilt men and leads to large dropout rates among already defensive clients" (p. 41).

Cognitive-Behavioral Approach

An alternative treatment model that focuses less on the power of patriarchy, and more on the act of violence is the *cognitive-behavioral model*. This approach emphasizes the role of violence as

a behavior, without a particular focus on patriarchy or sexism. It recognizes that people use violence to control the outcome of stressful and unpleasant situations. Cognitive-behavioral men's groups emphasize skills training around anger management techniques like time-outs, deep breathing and other relaxation strategies, as alternatives to violent outbursts.

Critiques of these programs point out that they fail to address the socialization process that is the source of these behaviors. They also point out that men can use these anger management techniques as further sources of control and domination in their intimate relationships. So, while there might be less overt violence, there is even more control and domination (Gondolf, 2004). Finally, like the feminist psycho-educational approach, the cognitive-behavioral approaches have been criticized for not connecting emotionally with the men they work with. These programs all focus on cognition and skill-acquisition, and leave the inner lives of the men they serve out of the picture.

While these two approaches differ, there is a recognition that a change in deep-seated attitudes and beliefs is fundamental. The dominant treatment models focus on skills training and anger management, re-educating male batterers to 1) take responsibility for their abusive behavior; 2) use techniques to avoid abuse; 3) develop alternative behaviors; and 4) understand the rationalizations for abuse (Austin & Dankwort, 1999). They all focus on cognition and behavior, and not on the emotional lives of the batterers themselves.

Group Therapeutic Approach

While the psycho-educational and cognitive-behavioral approaches are dominant, another approach has evolved from the group therapy work of the 1970s. The *group therapeutic* approach emphasizes the establishment of a safe and trusting environment for the men to explore their personal lives and stories of trauma. The assumption is that by creating a positive space for men to be and interact, they are more motivated to be self-reflective and make real, lasting changes in their behavior (Mankowski, et. al., 2002). This approach works primarily on the emotional side of men's development, as opposed to the cognitive side, emphasizing men's examination and exploration of their feeling states that trigger violent behaviors.

Feminist critics of this approach argue that focusing on men's trauma is colluding with the perpetrator, at the victim's expense. They see the focus on the individual and psychological context takes away from the focus on patriarchy and male socialization. They also see that the rather open-ended approach to group therapy that is responsive to men's issues and concerns does not ensure that the required information necessary for men's re-education will take place. "Therapeutic work with batterers is often criticized as focusing more on helping men feel better about themselves than on getting them to acknowledge and come to terms with the suffering they have cause to the women in their lives" (Mankowski, et al., 2002. p. 179).

HOW EFFECTIVE ARE THESE BIPs?

While the practitioner community has begun to coalesce around an intervention strategy, the research community has struggled with the question: are these programs effective in reducing men's abuse of women? Do men who go through these batterer intervention programs re-assault their partners? Do they show a change in behavior with regard to the use of violence and other

abusive exertions of power? More importantly, do they show a change in attitude about the appropriateness of violence as an option?

Unfortunately, the research data that has been gathered over the past two decades is marginal, at best. A review of over 40 published evaluations of batterer programs shows that these programs alone have little or no effect (Gondolf, 2004). While some programs do show a slight reduction in re-assault rates (the most popular measure of program effectiveness), the effects are linked to the intervention system of which the batterer intervention program is a part (including police practices, court action, probation supervision, civil protection orders, etc.), and not necessarily a result of the course itself (Gondolf, 2004). The field has recognized that coordinated community response is necessary to achieve successful results. As one practitioner group states:

“Only when a community takes domestic violence seriously with clear and consistent consequences, do batterer intervention programs exist in the environment where people can change.” (Support Network for Battered Women).

Current Concerns

While there are a variety of approaches to working with abusers, it is clear that the dominant approach (the Duluth model) has set-out to punish and re-educate abusive men. Abusers are coerced into attending mandated re-education sessions, where they are shamed and told how wrong and offensive their behavior has been. They are forced to learn a different set of behaviors, and expected to then leave the mandated classes as transformed men. No wonder many of these programs are experiencing a common set of issues:

- Men don't complete the programs. There is a high drop-out rate (California Task Force, 2005).
- The programs have very little impact on behavior. Re-offending rates for abusers who have completed these programs is very similar to abusers who have not attended the mandated programs (Gondolf, 2004; Babcock and La Taillade, 2000).
- The programs have even less impact on attitudes. Despite the focus on forced re-education, programs routinely show almost no change in attitude. In fact, it is feared that men appear to be learning more socially acceptable forms of controlling their intimate partners (Jackson, et. al., 2003).
- The programs have not developed culturally-sensitive practices, but rather, have been designed for the generic mainstream, white-male (Williams, 1994).

Alternative Approaches

In reviewing the literature on batterer intervention programs, a major philosophical question arises, and that is:

Is a coercive, abusive approach an effective strategy to help transform men who have been coercive and abusive?

The question resonates with the insights of leading scholars in the violence prevention field, such as Harvard Professor James Gilligan, who emphasize therapy and love over punishment and shame. In his recent book, *Preventing Violence*, Gilligan, who has spent a lifetime studying “lifers” and other violent prison inmates, states:

The goal would be to replace the “monster factories” that most prisons now are with therapeutic communities designed to enable people who are deeply damaged, and damaging, to recover their humanity or to gain a degree of humanity they had never been able to acquire; in short, to help them heal themselves and learn, in the process, how to heal others and even repair some of the damage they have done. (p. 119).

Mankowski, Haaken and Silvergleid (2002) point out a direction that potentially reconciles the divergent approaches. They speculate that:

Theories of masculinity that integrate structural theories *about* men's power and psychological accounts of men's *experiences of powerlessness* could productively reconcile the views of victim advocates and those of providers who attend more to batterers' emotional lives.

They go on to further suggest that the most desirable approach is to integrate sociological theories of power and control with psychological analysis of individual feelings of powerlessness while not subjugating one to the other.

One Final Note.

On October 30, 2006, we attended a round table conversation on Batterer Intervention Programs at the Blue Shield office in San Francisco. The discussions summarized much of the state of the art of the field. The discussion acknowledged that batterer intervention programs are just one small piece of a complex “coordinated community response” puzzle. In other words, wrap-around services, enticements, and supports to help men leave violence behind are all necessary. However, the discussion also recognized that the pervasive socialization process that makes violence an accepted, normative behavior for men is so strong, that what is required are new communities of men, not new classes for men. The practitioners gathered together hypothesized that while current batterer intervention programs exist within a coercive judicial system, perhaps they need to take a more “restorative justice” approach, and move from treatment to healing, and from a judicial system-approach to a community-based approach. This is consistent with what some researchers refer to as a more “ecological and systems model of batterer intervention” (Silvergleid and Mankowski, 2006).

The importance of community-building is reinforced by more recent research which explores participants perceptions of critical components of successful batterer programs. In interviews and focus groups, participants say that “the single most important factor in their change process was the emotionally safe treatment environment or “asylum” that was created through respect, “talk-share-common ground,” and support from the other group members and the facilitators” (p. 140). Therefore, research is moving from focusing on the curriculum, to looking at the dynamics of the group, in terms of determining most effective practices in batterer intervention programs. This picture of mutual support and mutual respect is far from the shaming, humiliating re-education approach of the traditional Duluth model.

The question was asked: what would it look like if there was a wrap-around community for offenders? In a variety of ways, the Breakthrough Men's Community is beginning to answer this question.

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Chapter 4. Study Methodology and Procedures

This section describes the research methodology and procedures employed in this study. We begin with preliminaries, followed by the opening round of interviews, then the construction and piloting of the survey. We then describe the circumstances under which 164 men responded to the survey. The next stage was the organization and tallying of the data, followed by the analysis and then the preparation of a 60-page data summary. This summary was used for two purposes: as a basis for six focus group interviews, which were largely structured by revealing selected relevant findings and asking for reactions and interpretation; and, secondly, as the starting point for the deliberations of a group dedicated to producing an organizational development plan for the Breakthrough Men’s Community. This group will be referred to below as the BMC ODG. Finally, we describe the process of producing this report and the initial steps for disseminating our findings.

These steps are summarized in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Calendar of Procedures

Date	Event	Outcome
July 2006	Grant received from Blue Shield Foundation	Research team formed
September	Preliminary activities	Research plan made; initial ID of key issues; familiarity with central DV/BIP issues
October	Initial Interviews	Menu of issues and concerns
Jan–April 07	Survey design and piloting	Multiple survey drafts
April–July	Survey completion	Survey made available, completed by 164 BT graduates
June–Dec	Data organization, analysis, summary	Data spreadsheet; data summaries
Feb–Mar 08	Focus Group Interviews	Additional data
March–May	Organizational development process	Written report (Ch. 8)
April–May	Preparation of written report	Final draft of report
May–June	Initial dissemination of findings	BT Town Hall meeting Community meeting

PRELIMINARY ACTIVITIES

While the grant request was largely the work of the Founder and Operations Director of Breakthrough, the two-man research team was first involved in the summer of 2006 in reviewing the details, especially the procedures and the time framework being proposed. In September, 2006, we met the BMC Board, discussed the project and received their approval to take charge of the process. We then mapped out a series of activities aimed at assembling the information required to compose an effective and relevant survey instrument. The most urgent of these was to become familiar with the literature on domestic violence and Batterer Intervention Programs (BIPs) so that this aspect of the grant activities could be fully and accurately represented. A summary of our findings in this regard can be found in Chapter 7 below. At this stage, we also inspected our own experiences with the Breakthrough program and as members of the BMC in order to flush out any possible biases in terms of specific concepts, tools, teaching and learning

procedures, or outcomes. We found none. Nevertheless, this study can be characterized as having a “bias for best,” isomorphic with the concept of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) which is described in Chapter 8 by the external OD specialist, Horacio Trujillo. We both, after all, had a very positive experience with BT and were motivated to help the BMC make the most of the opportunity provided by this grant.

INITIAL INTERVIEWS

We began with extensive interviews with the Founder and the OD, exploring a range of issues from a brief history of the program to the nomination of key informants to their expectations for the content of the evaluation to the logistics for disseminating the survey. We then (October 2006) joined the BMC Board for the last afternoon of their annual planning retreat and facilitated a 3-hour session of brainstorming and deliberation. The board members shared their views on the strengths of BT, areas for growth and improvement and their hopes and plans for the future. We then took these same broad themes to a number of individual interviews with BT graduates. We sought out especially long standing, active members of the BMC in order to delineate as accurately as possible the various facets of the community's activities and overall nature. The findings from the Board retreat are included in Appendix 2.

One particularly important event during this stage was the opportunity for both of us to attend a half-day conference on the impact of domestic violence prevention activities, organized by the Blue Shield Foundation in San Francisco. Here we were able to listen to and interact with specialists in domestic violence issues and with program representatives from around the state. This helped greatly in clarifying for us the central issues in the work of BIPs within the wider context of the domestic violence problem. We were also able to talk at length with the program officer responsible for our grant and we came away with an enhanced understanding of the expectations of the Blue Shield Foundation for our project.

SURVEY DESIGN AND PILOTING

By January 2007, these early activities had led us to a point where we were comfortable drafting the written survey instrument. The first draft was completed in February and then subjected to a period of review and piloting, comprising the following:

- A detailed review at a meeting with the Founder and the OD;
- Individual BT men volunteered to work through the survey draft and provided written feedback;
- Individual BT men were provided with a copy of the draft and then talked it through with us over the telephone;
- A self-led group of eleven BT graduates offered to work with us, devoting a full 3-hour meeting to working through the survey, responding to and then commenting on each item.

On the basis of this feedback, the survey was revised. The second version was piloted in early April, 2007, with a volunteer group of nine BT men gathering to respond to the survey and identify any inaccuracies, ambiguities, excessive wordiness or redundancies. It should be noted that at all stages of piloting, concern was expressed about the length of the instrument and the time attention required to complete it. However, we received very few specific suggestions as to

how to shorten it and all who participated in the piloting agreed that there was substance and relevance in all sections of the survey.

SURVEY COMPLETION

Given this issue of length, it was decided to facilitate the gathering of the survey data through three special BMC events, dubbed “Survey Parties.” Three appropriate sites were identified around the Monterey Peninsula: one in Marina (late April), one in Carmel Valley (early May), and one in Monterey (mid-May). Invitations were issued to the community and the deal was sweetened with food and the opportunity to interact with BT friends during breaks in the main business. The response was encouraging and the first 97 completed surveys were gathered from these events.

The participants having signed in at the survey parties, their names were then removed from a copy of the BT mailing list and a further 392 were mailed out with stamped and addressed return envelopes. By the formal close of the survey, July 31, 2007, a further 67 surveys were returned by mail, for a grand total of 164 respondents.

ORGANIZING, TALLYING AND SUMMARIZING THE DATA

As the surveys were being returned, the research team met with two data entry specialists hired for this part of the project. An extensive EXCEL spread sheet was devised and the data were successfully entered by August 31, 2007. Normal protocols were followed in the data entry: responses were entered verbatim, for example, with “XXX” indicating illegible words. In September, the quantitative data were tallied using EXCEL tools and tabulated displays were generated where appropriate. Given the richness of the qualitative data, it was decided, after consultation with statistical specialists, to leave the quantitative data as descriptive statistics only, with averages calculated where necessary, but no calculations of probability or reliability. Where possible, these data were tabulated and entered into the data summary.

In the following three months, we worked closely with the qualitative data. Sets of written responses and comments were examined for commonalities and repetition and items placed into categories whenever possible. In cases where the respondents had been brief and clear, we were able to add the total number of mentions of a particular concept or tool. For each qualitative item, we read through the all the responses and then selected a sub-set as typical and representative. These were then added to the data summary, which was completed by the end of 2007.

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

At this point, it was clear to us that we were in no position to complete the planned focus group interviews and complete the written report by the original due date (February 28, 2008). We therefore requested and were granted an extension of 3 months. We then set about using the information from the surveys (and, in particular, responses to our solicits on the final page) to assemble six focus groups: BT teachers; other members of BT teaching teams (formerly known as Educators and Allies); BT men who were fathers of sons; BT men with declared issues of anger and/or violence; BT graduates with little or no current contact with the BMC; and spouses or partners of BT men. In addition, we pursued our interest in the self-led groups (or BT3) by conducting telephone interviews with representatives of groups from three categories: of long

standing and functioning well; recently formed and functioning well; and on the verge of disbanding.

Invitations were issued for the six focus group interviews, which were held at the recently acquired Breakthrough headquarters in Carmel on successive Mondays in February and March 2008. These events were audio recorded and facilitated by one research team members while the other sat back from the group and took detailed notes. Key questions were prepared and distributed on a handout and relevant excerpts from the data summary were placed on PowerPoint slides and exhibited on a screen. These materials can be inspected in Appendix V. The focus group interviews are summarized in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Summary of Focus Group Interviews

Group #	Date	Participants	Number of participants
1	25 February	Breakthrough teaching team (Educators, Allies)	9
2	3 March	Breakthrough teaching team (Teachers)	5
3	10 March	BT fathers with sons	8
4	17 March	BT graduates with little/no involvement	4
5	24 March	BT graduates with anger/violence issues	7
6	31 March	Spouses and Partners of BT graduates	8

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT GROUP

The 60-page data summary was also employed to initiate the process of creating an organizational development plan for BT. A group of five BT insiders—the Founder, the Chairman of the Board and three graduates—were joined by a qualified outsider, a local clergyman interested in the central issue of this study, and an external consultant/facilitator, Horacio Trujillo. Each member of the group received a copy of the data summary and was tasked with preparing a short written response and a set of crucial issues or questions. The former were distributed to the rest of the group and the latter were brought to an evening meeting on Thursday, March 6. The research team attended this meeting as observers. These first deliberations were summarized in a written report by the Chairman of the Board, Robert Weston, which appears as Appendix VI to this report.

A second meeting was held on Thursday, April 3 where more specific discussions were organized around key issues identified in the earlier steps of this process. The outcomes were documented in a written report by the external consultant; this document appears in this report as Chapter 8. The intent of the Breakthrough Board is to use the report as the starting point of a formal process of organizational planning and a Board retreat is planned for this summer to take the next steps.

REPORT PREPARATION

Drafting of this report began in early April, immediately after the final focus group interview. A complete first draft was finished in early May and an editor went through the manuscript to reconcile the writing and format choices of the three authors (two researchers and the OD consultant). Meanwhile, the audio recordings of the focus group were examined and transcripts prepared of key passages so that the accuracy of the quotations in the report could be verified.

We then carefully read the second draft, re-writing where necessary and checking the quotations for accuracy. The third draft was then submitted to an editor for final checking and formatting.

INITIAL DISSEMINATION OF FINDINGS

On Thursday May 8, 100 Breakthrough graduates attended a Town Hall meeting to celebrate the completion of the study and be informed of its key findings. The evening was organized in five phases:

1. As the men arrived, they moved in small groups around the hall, where selected quotations from the survey data had been placed on large posters.
2. After a welcome by the Chairman of the Board, the first short presentation revealed (on PowerPoint slides) the more descriptive findings, indicating the demographics, motivations for joining, reactions to the BT experience and so forth. The men then had a few minutes in a small group to discuss these data and a few comments and reactions were heard.
3. The second presentation covered the impact of BT, including the impact on issues of anger and domestic violence. Again, there was a short period of group discussion and the sharing of brief reactions.
4. The third presentation, by the OD consultant, shared the highlights of the OD group process and report, with a final group discussion.
5. The final event was to honor those teaching team members who were present by reading to them a number of quotations from the survey data in which respondents had lauded the teaching teams' contribution and emphasized their crucial role in the BT program.

A second event has been planned for Thursday, June 19. The format will be similar, but the audience will be local therapists and mental health professionals, representatives from Breakfree (the parallel program for women), local specialists in domestic violence and BIPs, local educators and others. Several hundred invitations will be sent out, with an attendance of between 200 and 250 anticipated.

Within Breakthrough itself, the next step will be a Board of Directors retreat, planned for mid-August, at which the contents of this report, and especially of Chapter 8, the OD section, will be discussed and plans will be made for the next steps in the development and growth of the organization.

Chapter 5.1. Who is the Breakthrough Men's Community: Demographics and Motivations for Joining

The first formal Breakthrough course was offered in 1987. Breakthrough founder Fred Jealous gathered a group of six men in his office, constituting the first formal class. Between 1987 and 2006, approximately 620 men have participated in Breakthrough.¹

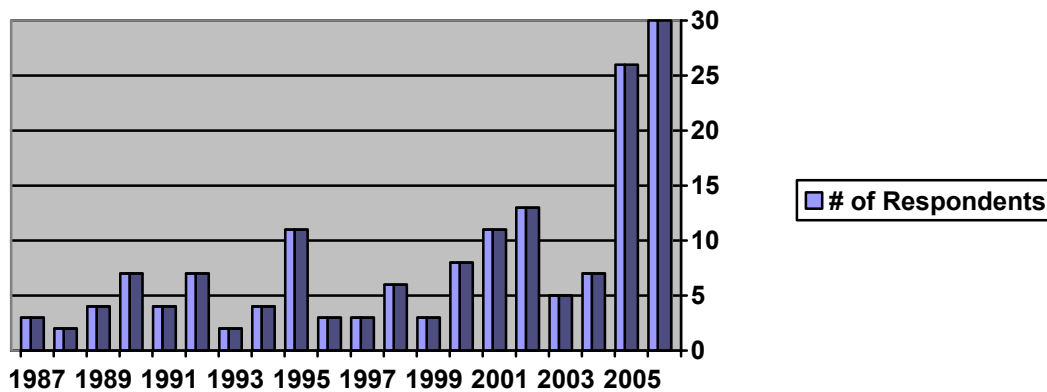
WHO ARE THE RESPONDENTS

The survey was mailed to the entire Breakthrough mailing list of almost 500. However, a number of surveys were returned due to faulty addresses. For the purposes of the current study, we consider the total number of correct addresses of Breakthrough participants to be 485.

Of the 485 correct addresses, we received 164 completed surveys, for a response rate of 34%

The sample of 164 Breakthrough men included graduates from the entire history of the Breakthrough program. On average, the survey respondents had completed Breakthrough 6.78 years ago. Three of the initial six participants from the 1987 cohort completed the survey. However, the sample is more heavily weighted towards more recent graduates. 55 of the 164 respondents (34%) completed the program in the past two years

Table 5.1.1: Year Completed Breakthrough



Demographics of Respondents

The average age of survey respondents is **54.25 years**. As the tables below indicate, the Breakthrough men who responded to the survey are overwhelmingly white (88%) and well educated. 67% of the respondents had at least completed 4 years of college; and 46% had completed a graduate degree. 63% of the respondents are parents.

¹ The total number of participants is a best guess estimate. Rosters from the early years were not archived. In addition, a devastating fire at the summer retreat center destroyed the computers that housed the existing Breakthrough archives and mailing lists. The lists have subsequently been re-built. The number of 620 was arrived at through discussions with the founder and lead teachers.

Table 5.1.2: Race Identity

White:	88%
Latino:	4%
Native American:	2%
African American:	1%
Asian:	1%
Did not specify:	2%

As described earlier, Breakthrough requires a significant commitment of time and financial resources. Participants are required to pay between \$875 and \$1,300 for each 17-week course. Scholarships are made available to support those without the financial means. Of the respondents, 21% received some form of scholarship from the community.

The one significant dimension of diversity that is present in the respondent group is with regard to sexual orientation. Breakthrough has made a significant effort to outreach to gay and bisexual men, especially in the past five years. 13% of respondents claimed either gay or bi-sexual identity, with an additional 8% choosing not to respond to this question. As addressing homophobia is core to the Breakthrough curriculum, the successful inclusion of gay and bi-sexual men in the program is a significant accomplishment. The authors find little evidence in the literature of men’s groups that explicitly work with both gay and straight men around issues of dominance and the social construction of the male role.

In conclusion, it is clear that the men who join Breakthrough are not economically or socially marginalized, but rather, are middle-aged and firmly grounded in the middle to upper-middle class of society. As Breakthrough requires a significant commitment of both time and money, this demographic reality is not surprising. Furthermore, the concept of self-help and personal transformation that is at the core of Breakthrough is most congruent with a more educated community. It is not surprising that 69% of the survey respondents had completed at least four years of college.

There was some discontent within the Breakthrough leadership when viewing the demographic data. There was a sense that the Breakthrough Men’s Community is more economically diverse than is represented by the survey. Perhaps the nature of the survey (20 pages in length) attracted a more-educated sub-set of respondents. We want to acknowledge this possibility, and at the same time, recognize that the rather homogenous nature of the respondents (white, middle-aged,

Table 5.1.3: Parental Status

Not a parent:	37%
Sons only:	12%
Daughters Only:	19%
Sons and Daughters:	25%

Table 5.1.4: Highest Level of Education

High School:	15%
Two-Year College:	11%
Four-year College:	23%
Graduate Degree:	46%
No Response:	5%

Table 5.1.5: Received Scholarship

Scholarship:	22%
No Scholarship:	78%

Table 5.1.6: Sexual Orientation

Straight:	79%
Gay:	8%
Bi-sexual:	5%
No Response:	8%

and well-educated) is consistent with the nature of the program, the word-of-mouth approach to recruitment, and the relatively high barrier of entry that is presented in terms of both time and financial commitment.

Involvement in the Breakthrough Men's Community

The formal Breakthrough program comprises two courses, one of 17 weeks, one of 16.

However, in creating Breakthrough, the Founder's intention was to do more than just create a course for men's growth and self-improvement. Rather, the organization was intentionally named "Breakthrough Men's Community," and there has been a conscious effort to do more than just offer the BT1 and BT2 courses. There has been an intentional effort to create a community of men that can interact with each other and break with the dominant, male role patterning that is present in society. Therefore, in addition to BT1 and BT2, BMC offers other opportunities for involvement. The most significant community activities include:

I have enjoyed daily check-ins with the same partner for two years now & it continues to be fun, an honor, a loving commitment to both of us & a life transforming event. One of the highlights of my day.

- Breakthrough III or "Self-Led Group": After completing the second 17-week course, men are encouraged to continue to meet weekly as a group, on their own, with minimal direction from the lead teachers and teaching teams.
- Summer Retreat: Annually since 1990, Breakthrough has organized a "Summer Retreat" for program graduates. The retreats are usually held over a week-end in July, and provide an opportunity for in-depth work and personal development, building on the core Breakthrough material, while introducing new concepts and approaches.
- Participating as a Member of the Teaching Team (Lead Teacher, Educator, or Ally): For each new course of 18–24 participants, there is a teaching team made up of 8–10 graduates of the program. The teaching team includes the lead teachers, small group leaders (known as educators), and allies who are present to provide support, or as Breakthrough calls it, provide a "loving presence" for the men in the class.
- Workshops and Events: BMC also sponsors regular workshops and lectures to both reinforce the learning from the courses, and also to introduce graduates to new concepts and ideas. Workshops have included a series called "Review of the Basics" offered by the founder and other BT presenters; co-sponsored events with local women's organizations; and lectures and workshops featuring guest speakers such as David Rico. Less formal events include musical evenings and working sessions (painting, landscaping) to enhance the new facility in Carmel.
- Check-In Partners: Breakthrough graduates are encouraged to continue working one-on-one with a "check-in partner" both while the formal courses are taking place, and after. Some survey respondents reported having maintained a regular check-in partner relationship for nearly two decades.

Not surprisingly, the Breakthrough men who chose to complete the survey are men who tend to be more significantly involved in the Breakthrough community. 82% of the respondents stated that they had participated in a self-led group after having completed Breakthrough II and 68% report having attended at least one summer retreat. Most impressively, 34% of the sample (55 men) reported having served as an educator or ally for other classes of men after they themselves graduated from BT2. Finally 65% of the men state that they regularly read the Breakthrough Newsletter and e-mail Announce.

Table 5.1.7: Involvement in the BT Community

<i>Question 1.2.d. In what ways have you been involved in the Breakthrough community since graduating from the workshop? Please check all that apply.</i>		
Activity	#	%
Self-led group	135	82%
Summer retreat	111	68%
Read the Newsletter	106	65%
Reading E-mail Announce	106	65%
Check-In Partner	97	59%
Attending Events	95	58%
Ally or Educator	55	34%
Financial Support	49	30%
Working on Committees or Board	33	20%
Volunteer at Events	32	20%
Other	3	2%

Clearly, the sample over-represents men who have been more active in the Breakthrough community. This is not surprising. Completing the survey itself was a formidable task, requiring approximately 90-minutes. It is not surprising that men who completed the course but did not stay involved in further community activities did not take the time to complete the survey. To address this issue, a special focus group was held of men who are relatively “less active” in the Breakthrough community. Two men who attended this focus group had not been involved in any BMC activities since completing the program.

Finally, the mailing list of Breakthrough graduates did not include men who did not complete the program. Unfortunately, contact information for these men was not available. However, according to the program administrator, approximately 95% of the men who start the program complete BT1 and 90% BT2.

THE HOW’S AND WHY’S OF JOINING BREAKTHROUGH

How do Men Find Out About Breakthrough?

Unlike the court mandated BIPs, men who come to Breakthrough do so voluntarily, though frequently with significant persuasion from spouses, significant others, and/or counselors. Over

Table 5.1.8.

Question 2.2: How did you find out about Breakthrough?		
	#	%
Breakthrough Grad	67	42%
Counselor	55	35%
Friend	44	28%
Spouse	18	11%
Print Material	13	8%
Total Responses	159	

the past twenty years, Breakthrough has become well-established in the Monterey Bay region, and is well-known and respected by the local therapeutic and counseling community. Word-of-mouth networking and counselor referrals make up the bulk of the ways that men find their way into Breakthrough. 42% of respondents learned about Breakthrough from a Breakthrough graduate. 35% were referred by a counselor. 28% were referred by friends, and 11% were referred by their spouses.

Only 8% of respondents found out about Breakthrough through print material.

Motivation for Joining Breakthrough

In order to understand how BT men are similar to or different from the men who enter the mandated BIPs, it was important to gain insight into the participants' motivations for joining Breakthrough. The survey asked the men to review a list of possible reasons for joining the program, and rank them in order from most to least compelling, making only those items that apply to their lives. For analysis purposes, these items were reverse-coded, so that the most frequently-cited item would have the highest score. The scores are reported in Table 5.1.9 below.

My life was in a spin. I was married for twenty years, and it was breaking apart. One night I went down with my sister to hear some music. A couple of her friends were there, and we started talking. They were both Breakthrough guys. And I was just blown away by all the stuff they were going through and how expressive and how OK they were with it all. Those guys were amazing, and I wanted to be like that. They told me about the next orientation, and so I went. (LI)

Three dominant themes emerged as key motivations for men to join the BMC: (1) Desire to improve relationships with spouse and family; (2) personal growth and self-esteem issues; and (3) overcoming isolation and depression.

The most significant response was “partner relationship issues,” as 71% of respondents identified it as a relevant motivation. “General relationship issues” was also in the top four reasons cited, at 48%. Clearly, a significant motivation for respondents to join Breakthrough was the desire to address problems in their intimate relationships at home. Another significant motivation cited by respondents was the desire for individual growth and improvement. 67% of respondents identified “to become a better person” as a motivating factor; and 63% identified “self-esteem issues” as important. The third principal reason for men joining Breakthrough has to do with overcoming “isolation” (48%) or “depression” (42%).

While 30% of respondents identified “anger management issues” as a motivating force, it was clearly not a dominant theme for the respondents. Even more surprisingly, only 9% of men identified “domestic violence issues” and only 8% identified “alcohol and drug addiction” as motivational factors for their joining Breakthrough.

Insights from Focus Groups

In the focus groups, themes of family strife, personal trauma and conflict, desire for personal growth and overcoming depression and isolation were all expressed. The theme of significant family strife was well described by this participant in the “fathers of sons” focus group:

I was going through a really ugly divorce. I was pretty much crazy. It turned out a lot of the men in the group were going through divorces as well, trying to figure out why everything went south. (FS)

One participant in the “fathers of sons” focus group captures the state of many men battling depression and problematic marriages:

It was recommended by a family counselor, trying to work out some problems with my wife. Shortly into it, I learned that it was really for me and my well-being and my self-esteem. I suffered with depression for most of my adult life, and was taking some medication, and had been in some groups before. But within two or three months, I was able to get off the prozac and start building some self-esteem." (FS)

Table 5.1.9: Motivation for joining Breakthrough

<i>Question 2.1. What were the most compelling reasons for your joining Breakthrough?</i>							
	Total Value	Number Checked	% Checked	# Top Choice	# 2nd Choice	# 3rd Choice	# Top 3 Choices
Partner relationship issues	906	116	71%	21	5	8	34
To become a better person	792	110	67%	7	8	10	25
Self-esteem issues	790	103	63%	5	12	9	26
General family relationship issues	669	79	48%	4	12	7	23
Isolation	565	78	48%	3	7	6	16
To improve communication skills	551	71	43%	2	7	2	11
Depression	546	69	42%	8	6	4	18
Anger management issues	449	50	30%	6	6	3	15
To meet men/join a men's community	445	64	39%	2	7	2	11
To make friends	403	56	34%	0	2	5	7
Other	293	29	18%	10	2	2	14
Personal loss	276	31	19%	2	6	3	11
Work relationship issues	275	36	22%	2	1	1	4
Workaholism	274	32	20%	1	2	4	7
To be of service to other men	262	34	21%	0	2	0	2
Domestic violence issues	122	15	9%	1	3	1	5
Alcohol/drug addiction	98	13	8%	0	1	2	3

A participant in the “Anger/Violence” focus group also emphasized the deep dissatisfaction with their lives that many BT participants feel, here juxtaposed with the subsequent changes:

I saw something in my friends who had gone through Breakthrough, and their lives were sure a lot happier. And my life sucked. I didn't have time for anything. I was spinning, going in so many directions, I couldn't focus to complete a project. Today, the more I put in, the more I get out. Volunteering at every opportunity that I can possibly get. And the gifts that I get out of that are just huge and miraculous. I could never have expected life to be this good in a few short years. (AV)

Another participant in the “less involved” focus group identified anger issues, and a specific incident as motivating him to seek out Breakthrough, again contrasted with some of the outcomes of the BT experience:

I had a real problem with anger. It was on-going, and then a really ugly incident occurred, and I knew things had to change. I had been through therapy before, but this was different. The leaders really understood men and their unique condition. So I grew up thinking I was a worthless piece of crap. So, anyway, what came out of that was this thing, you know, this inherent nature thing was really quite revolutionary for me., and I, really, you know, it was just wonderful to have that, you know - this idea that although I'm feeling bad there's nothing really wrong either with me or anything. Nothing's wrong - I'm just having some bad feelings. Anyway, it gave me permission to have feelings, and that it's ok, you know, to be close to men, and, you know, have an intimate conversation with them without feeling that you're going to do something sexual with them. You know, the big homophobia thing, that helped a lot. And so my life before and after BT, it was, I was, you know, just constantly getting angry and having these meltdowns. Afterwards, I was much better able to control that and be a better role model for my sons. (LI)

Finally, a significant sub-set of men had been involved in a history of therapy and self-help groups, and had heard about Breakthrough and joined because of the program's local reputation. A participant in the “anger/violence” focus group exemplified this history:

I had been in a Men's group for twenty years. And one of the members told me that I HAD TO do Breakthrough because it would transform my life. I went to the first meeting not knowing anything, and just loved the concept. Really felt comfortable, and wanted to look at the things going on in my life. I had spent most of my life living in depression and isolation, and Breakthrough taught me about that. (AV)

SUMMARY

While Breakthrough is not a mandated program, and the men in the program have joined voluntarily, it is also important to recognize that many men join Breakthrough from a sense of desperation, a last ditch attempt to address a failing marriage, a deep-seated anger issue, or a lifetime of depression and isolation. The community has grown largely through word-of-mouth, and recommendations provided by the local therapeutic community. Many men acknowledged learning about Breakthrough from friends or other Breakthrough graduates who they had met. Clearly, the issues that many come to Breakthrough to address are diverse, from failing

marriages to depression and isolation. Only a subset acknowledged coming to the program explicitly to address issues of anger and violence, or substance abuse. In fact, only one respondent identified “domestic violence” as the #1 reason for their joining Breakthrough. However, it is important to note that “anger management” was identified by 30% of respondents as an important motivating force for joining BMC.

Men who are mandated to go to BT will have more resistance to the process than men who choose to be there. However, I think it's also fair to say that the men who choose to be there are also pretty resistant to the process and usually they're there out of desperation or their wife has told them to get help or I'm out of here. Sometimes, the wife makes the men go to BT, sometimes the addictions and life being out of control and sheer desperation drives men to be there. Fortunately, BT seems to be quite good at dealing with men's resistance to the process. I think, maybe, for men who are mandated to be there they might wear it more on their sleeve. Even I've been in a class where one man was so resistant that, I mean, it just wasn't going to happen. He just wasn't there, he wasn't ready to do some of the things that it called for, and he didn't stay with the class. (AV)

Summary

- * Surveys were mailed to 485 correct addresses of Breakthrough graduates; 34% of those responded.
- * 88% of respondents are white; 69% of respondents have at least attended college; 46% have attended graduate school.
- * Respondents were generally more involved in Breakthrough community activities; 34% of respondents had at some point volunteered to be part of the teaching team; 68% have attended a summer retreat.
- * The overwhelming majority of men enter Breakthrough because of “partnership relationship issues.” Men also prominently cite “self-esteem,” “isolation,” and “depression” as reasons for joining.
- * A minority of men (9%) identify domestic violence as a reason for joining Breakthrough.

Chapter 5.2. The Course Content of Breakthrough

This section begins with a brief overview of the content of the Breakthrough 1 and Breakthrough 2 programs. We then examine the survey data which reveal respondents' assessment of the most significant and valuable concepts of the Breakthrough curricula. To these insights, we add confirmation and nuances from focus group comments.

THE BREAKTHROUGH CURRICULUM

To review, BT1 and BT2 together form a 33-week course for men with the purpose of facilitating their re-examination and reformulation of the significance of being both human and male at this point in the history of the species. Concomitant with this individual transformation and growth is the establishment of an autonomous community of men which will continue to

Table 5.2.1: The Breakthrough 1 Curriculum

Week	Key Topics	Special events
1	Introductions, welcome; workshop overview; goal setting	
2	Introduction to listening skills; the feeling of fear; feelings versus judgments; telling the truth and expressing feelings.	
3	Listening skills; self-esteem	
4	Self-esteem continued; affirmations	
5	Self-esteeming exercises; overview of communication skills; introduction to boundaries; using external boundaries	
6	Internal boundaries; active listening practice; celebrating one’s value	One day retreat
7	Dealing with an emotional charge; reducing intensity	Daily phone check-ins begin
8	Effective communication; coping versus healing	
9	Five feeling states; healing past hurts	Empowerment exercise
10	Overview of child development; codependency	Writing one’s history
11	Boyhood traumas & traumatic parenting styles; shame and the abusive/addictive cycle	
12	Interview with the 7-year-old boy; the adapted child feeling states	One day retreat
13	Personal histories completed	
14	Separating child and adult states (reparenting); separating adult, child and carried feeling states (accountability and truth telling); the Inner Child	Weekend retreat
15	Strengthening adult realities; review adult feelings and carried feelings	
16	More on the Adapted Child and reparenting	
17	Celebration of progress and achievement; evaluations	

provide the necessary guidance and support, enabling and inspiring BT men to continue to celebrate who they really are and to live the life they want for themselves and for everyone else. This is encapsulated in the BT vision statement: *Our vision is to create community by championing the full humanity and gifts of men and all people.*

Breakthrough 1

Breakthrough 1 is a 17-week workshop with nine central concepts: self-esteem, intimacy, boundaries, feelings, communication, healing, the male role, addictive behavior, and boyhood trauma. The topics are laid out over the 17 weekly meetings as seen in Table 5.2.1.

Table 5.2.2: The Breakthrough 2 Curriculum

Week	Key Topics	Special events
1	Introduction of the concept of Inherent Nature	
2	The value of Inherent Nature; Remembering; the Quieting Exercise	
3	Healing Partnerships; separating feelings from reality	
4	Challenging old fears around safety and trust; discharging fear	
5	Review: Distress patterns and healing	
6	Building trust: guidelines for listening partnerships	
7	The empowerment process: turning difficulties into opportunities	First daylong workshop
8	Carried shame, pseudo-realities; using contradictions for healing	
9	Reclaiming the goodness of our love as men; work with the Father	
10	Introduction: the body, intimacy and sex	
11	The body, intimacy and sex; the Five A’s (Richo)	
12	Sexual histories; the nature of sex addiction	Second daylong workshop
13	Sexual histories continued; the conditioned male sex role; sexual fantasy; understanding and opposing gay oppression and homophobia	Weekend workshop
14	Follow up on weekend work on sex and intimacy; physical self-care	
15	Self-led meetings: guidelines and practice	
16	Conclusion: Living without limits	

Breakthrough 2

The second course (16 weeks long) now challenges participants to make a deliberate and informed choice: to live their life as fully human males, with their inherent nature at the center, and with old fears, addictions and behavior patterns have been disowned and abandoned. Work continues on giving attention and encouragement to others, listening skills are further developed and deepened, and self-esteem and self-appreciation are pursued. The weekend workshop and meetings before and after it are devoted to the topics of the body, intimacy and sex. Breakthrough 2 ends with guidelines for self-led groups (BT3) and an opportunity (week 15) for participants to practice taking charge. The full curriculum can be seen in Table 5.2.2.

KEY CURRICULAR CONCEPTS AND TOOLS

Important Curricular Concepts

Given the variety and number of concepts and tools provided by the Breakthrough workshops, we wanted to ask the survey respondents for which they found most significant and valuable. We began with survey question 3.4, which asked respondents to look over a list of 34 content areas and to rate them in terms of importance and strength of impact. Four assignments were available, 1 (very important or helpful), 2 (of some importance or help), 3 (of little importance or help) and leave blank (no clear recollection). We then asked them to review the items marked as 1 (very important) and to circle the three most important. In Table 5.2.3 below, the data are presented as follows: “Total Points” is based on the following: 4 points = circled as one of top 3 choices; 3 points = very important or helpful; 2 points = of some importance or help; 1 point = of little importance or help. The Average represents the points total divided by the number of respondents. The remaining columns indicate, respectively, how many respondents placed the item in their top three, how many indicated it as very important, somewhat important and finally, of little importance.

Table 5.2.3: Rating of importance of content areas

<i>Question 3.4. Look over this list of content areas from Breakthrough 1 and 2. Please rate them in terms of importance and strength of impact.</i>						
	Total Pts.	Avg.	# Top 3	# Very	# Some -what	# Little
3.4.5 Boundaries	500.5	3.05	41	94	19	3
3.4.20 Inherent nature	479.5	2.92	34	97	22	8
3.4.2 Self-esteem	472	2.88	25	112	16	4
3.4.21 Reclaiming one's complete goodness as fully human males	463.5	2.83	22	101	33	6
3.4.15 Receiving supportive love and attention	460	2.80	9	123	26	2
3.4.6 Active listening	455	2.77	18	108	25	8
3.4.11 The nature and effects of childhood trauma	454.5	2.77	23	103	24	5
3.4.13 Re-parenting the little boy	454.5	2.77	24	92	39	4
3.4.14 Giving supportive love and attention	450.5	2.75	4	129	22	3
3.4.25 Choosing to act from one's "adult self"	448	2.73	18	105	28	5
3.4.3 "adaptive child", coping behaviors	441.5	2.69	7	117	28	6
3.4.28 Sessioning/listening partnerships	435.5	2.66	14	97	37	10

3.4.1 Confidentiality	427.5	2.61	7	106	36	9
3.4.24 Reclaiming the healing process for oneself	422	2.57	6	107	34	9
3.4.12 Affirming one's reality	421.5	2.57	8	99	42	8
3.4.7 Communication Skills	408.5	2.49	7	95	42	11
3.4.4 Distress patterns	407.5	2.48	5	92	52	7
3.4.10 Shame and the cycle of addiction and abuse	407.5	2.48	6	104	27	17
3.4.22 Abandoning the victim role of male conditioning	404.5	2.47	7	86	52	9
3.4.32 Intimacy	403.5	2.46	3	95	49	8
3.4.8 The five feeling states	399.5	2.44	9	83	52	10
3.4.17 Triggers for early hurts	398.5	2.43	9	89	44	7
3.4.19 Vulnerability	390	2.38	2	90	52	8
3.4.31 Gender conditioning	386	2.35	10	80	44	18
3.4.16 The "5 A's"	382.5	2.33	16	75	39	10
3.4.23 Assisting others to claim the life they really want	370.5	2.26	2	77	57	17
3.4.18 Integrity	369	2.25	5	79	48	16
3.4.34 Acting out of one's love as human beings	366	2.23	2	86	45	10
3.4.26 Empowerment and leadership	364	2.22	1	70	70	10
3.4.27 Conflict resolution	347.5	2.12	2	65	60	23
3.4.33 Distress that leads to sexual fantasy	341	2.08	2	65	57	24
3.4.9 The nature and effects of co-dependency	335.5	2.05	0	60	63	29
3.4.29 Spiritual connection	324	1.98	5	54	51	40
3.4.30 Aware/unaware touching behaviors	320.5	1.95	0	53	69	23
3.4.35 Other (please describe)	61	0.37	2	17	0	2

The key finding here is that almost all of these items are regarded as of at least some importance. 32 of the 34 items listed averaged above 2 and the other two fell only slightly below. Only two items were denied a place in someone's top three. Only one item (Spiritual Connection) received

more than 25 citations as "of little importance." Twenty of the thirty-four items were so labeled by fewer than ten respondents. In other words, there is every indication here that the various curriculum revisions have resulted in a program where just about all of the content is seen as important and relevant.

Inspection of the Total Points and Average columns reveals no real break in the ranking: the gradation is consistently steady, with no item very far from the ones above and below. However, the selection of *boundaries* (a key item in Breakthrough 1) and *inherent nature* (a vital piece of BT 2) conforms with our interview and focus group data (see below). In addition, there is confirmation of the top status of these items in the responses to a subsequent question.

To attain a little more reliability in the findings, we inserted a summary section at the end of Section III of the survey. The first question (survey item 3.11) asked respondents to write in the three most important concepts (ideas, conceptual frameworks) learned through Breakthrough. As the responses were almost entirely in the form of words or short phrases, we were able to add the number of mentions for each item. All items receiving 10 or more mentions were included in the data. These results appear in Table 5.2.4.

Table 5.2.4: The three most important concepts learned in Breakthrough

<i>Question 3.11. List the three most important concepts (ideas, conceptual frameworks) learned through Breakthrough.</i>	
Boundaries	78
Inherent nature	75
Carried feelings/separating feelings from reality, expressing feelings; 5 feeling states	36
Adult reality, etc.	24
Adaptive child	22
Listening/communication model	22
Inner child, small boy, re-parenting	19
Childhood trauma, conditioning	19
Self-esteem	18
The Five A's	16

Items receiving a handful of nominations included: shame and addiction cycles; moderation, slowing down, restraint; integrity; discharge, releasing distress, releasing distress, sessions; community, reduced isolation, interpersonal support, inter-connectedness; and intimacy (with men).

The summary question data clearly endorse the earlier finding that *Boundaries* and *Inherent Nature* stand out for this group of respondents as especially important. This time, there is no close third place finisher: even when aggregated, the various mentions of feelings and feeling states are less than half of the totals for the top two. Related to this finding is the decline of *Self-esteem* from third to ninth place in the rankings. In other words, when placed in a list, *self-esteem* is regarded as a key topic; when asked to nominate the three most important, respondents found it less salient. We can speculate that this is a plainer, more self-evident concept, known to the men before they started the program; or that is viewed more as an outcome (as in heightened or strengthened self-esteem) than as a central component of the curriculum. There are comments proposing both explanations in our interview data.

We are also cognizant of the overlap among these concepts. It is quite feasible, for example, to take these four items from the responses to survey question 3.11 and propose to aggregate them:

Adult reality, etc	24
Adaptive child	22
Inner child, small boy, re-parenting	19
Childhood trauma, conditioning	19

Together, they represent the separation of child and adult states, the relationship between childhood trauma and adult behaviors and an understanding of how an adult can intervene to break the cycle. Together, they represent a total of 84 mentions, which would put them at the top of the list. Here is a fuller than normal citation from the responses to this item, indicating how these items are clustered together in the view of some BT graduates:

Feeling an emotion, recognizing a similar childhood experience, recognizing I am now an adult, holding the feeling, feeling it dissolve.

In sum, while the data in Table 5.2.4 may be regarded as identifying the two or three most important areas of the BT curriculum, the overall finding is not shaken, that there is nothing in the two workshops identified as of little or no importance.

Key Tools and Skills Learned

The 34 items listed in question 3.4 include tools and strategies for action as well as concepts and ideas. We therefore added a second summary question, survey item 3.12, which asked respondents to list the three most important skills (tools or strategies for action) learned through BT1 and BT2.

Table 5.2.5: The three most important tools

<i>Question 3.12. List the three most important skills (tool or strategies for action) leaned through Breakthrough 1 and 2.</i>	
Active listening	101
Check-ins, sessions, peer counseling	50
Self-awareness, separating feeling states from thinking, etc.	43
Affirmations	41
Boundaries	27
Identifying, expressing feelings	26
Self-esteem, inherent self	19
Inner child, reparenting, etc.	13
Communication skills	9
Breathing	6
The five A’s	4
Physical nurturing	4

There is clearly some blurring here of what constitutes a concept and what is a tool or strategy for action. Some items are clearly both: *Boundaries* again appears prominently here, indicating that once grasped as a concept it eventually also becomes a powerful tool. The case of *Self-*

Esteem and *Inherent Self* are less clear, but obviously represent concepts, which contribute to effective action. Most striking here is the promotion of *Active Listening* from sixth in Table 5.2.3 to the runaway winner here. We infer that this is viewed very much as a tool, perhaps readily grasped as a concept, and seen as used both frequently and effectively. Interview and focus group data support this view. Here are some of the complete citations in the survey data (that is, respondents doing more than simply namely "active listening"):

My listening skills have improved because I can reflect on what the person is saying.

Active, non-judgmental listening.

Listening without comments or advice during phone check-ins.

Listening—really, really ask and try to understand exactly what was being said and to not misinterpret.

Focus Group Insights

As noted above, the survey findings received significant confirmation in the focus group data. One participant, for example, was keen to endorse the importance of the concept of *Inherent Nature*:

So I grew up thinking I was a worthless piece of crap. So, anyway, what came out of that was that this thing, you know, this inherent nature Idea was really quite revolutionary for me, and I really, you know, it was just wonderful to have that, you know - the idea that although I'm feeling bad there's nothing really wrong, either with me or anything. Nothing's wrong - I'm just having some bad feelings. Anyway it gave me permission to have feelings. (LI)

Similarly, a number of participants endorsed *self-esteem* and often related it to *boundaries*

The change that I see with myself is primarily related to self-esteem. I was scared to death, not knowing what I am doing, and what I am doing is not good enough. So there has been a big difference there. Just being myself. (FS)

I can relate to the self-esteem comments: don't need anyone to validate my feelings; just glad I got them. (FS)

Growing up, other people's emotional states were my responsibility. However they behaved to me was my fault. I couldn't be myself because I was too busy making sure either I didn't get in other people's way or I was taking care of them. So the boundaries thing was really big. Now, they get to go through their own stuff. I can feel empathy for them but I don't have to feel responsibility unless there is responsibility I need to take. Part of being human is going through stuff. . . . Now I get to feel authentic stuff as long as I have good boundaries. That was really good for me. It's really nice to be able to say "I'm sorry you're going through this, but it's not me." That's really nice. (FS)

I've realized that I've always had this judge inside of me, it never slept. It was always criticizing me, telling me what I did wrong, what I didn't do right. That I wasn't enough. And after 45 years of that, I started to fall apart. What working on boundaries did was stopping the criticisms and self-judgments, self-loathing. (FS)

Here is a particularly detailed account of the importance of *self-esteem*:

I went into Breakthrough thinking it was to help my relationship, but I soon learned it was for me, and my well-being, and self-esteem. I had suffered with depression for most of my adult life; within two months of starting Breakthrough I had built enough self-esteem that I was able to get off the prozac. Before Breakthrough, I was taking on everyone's distress, so when I stopped doing that, I started to get stronger, it was really life changing. It helped me as a person and helped me get the respect I deserved in my relationships. (FS)

Self-esteem and *Inherent Nature* are also closely related in some of the focus group data. Here is one example:

The self-esteem and self-confidence, other than in my work, I was not very self-confident, and didn't have much self-knowledge. Now, I not only believe I'm inherently good, but I KNOW I am. (FS)

The emergence of *self-esteem* is related in the focus group data to the conditions which help to foster it, particularly the love and acceptance of the teaching team and the other men in the group:

I felt that I was sort of faking it; acting how I was supposed to act; but the older I got, the harder it was to do that. Didn't have the comfort with my mate, wasn't able to share my fears. In Breakthrough, I felt safety, and love, and acceptance for who I was. Once I got that, I was off, then I had the power to make some changes. But until I really got that in myself, I was crippled, hopeless; I was all those things - helpless, powerless, etcetera. But the thing that allowed me to turn the corner was the feeling of being loved and accepted by the group. That was the switch. (FS)

You have these buddies, and as you grow up, your understanding of who you are is being defined by your friends, guy friends; then your friends in high school, then maybe friends in the military. You always have guys that you hang with, and that's a big part of your life, a big part of how you think about stuff. And then you are supposed to graduate and you find out you are by yourself, you have nobody; nobody to tell you that you are loved and respected. Alone, I was nobody. So, Breakthrough provided me that community, a place where we are accepted, where we can learn together. (FS)

The cluster of concepts discussed above—inner child, adaptive child, adult reality and so on—were described as important, especially in the focus group involving fathers with sons. Here are typical samples:

Before Breakthrough, I was always bouncing around from one adapted child to another - that was kind of what my life was like with an adult seldom in evidence. I am now vastly more conscious of my adapted child and pretty much keep him in line, give him a day off once in a while. (FS)

Before Breakthrough, I think my kid, I think he was being parented by a kid. I think I was in my childhood stage of just feeling everything as a kid, just holding it, carrying it, carrying it over, being an older kid. My kid was being parented by an older kid. Just a kid who grew up, got older, still pissed off, didn't know the rules of the game. . . . I think after Breakthrough, I would expect he'd say he saw a big difference in dad, I think, maintaining my boundaries kept me from getting anxious, getting angry - recognizing that it was just my emotions and there really wasn't anything to get angry about. I think he's got a different type of parent, a little more level-headed, doesn't shoot from the hip, a more resourceful grown-up dad. (FS)

If we don't get our needs met as children, we spend the rest of our adult lives trying to get them met. I think it still happens with me but, I don't know, it's less . . . I can now see my triggers, and choose not to react. (FS)

I certainly got a handle on my emotions [after BT]. I still have strong feelings, but I don't have to even chase down cause and effect because you spend enough time processing and working on it. I can dismiss them or put them aside because they are transient and they are artifacts. So from Breakthrough I gained the ability to slow down and not react. Sometimes things still trigger me and with my kids sometimes I can feel the grip, and I can interrupt. (FS)

The BT teachers focus group and the Teaching Team focus group both examined the findings in Table 5.2.3 and were surprised at some of the findings, which did not coincide exactly with their experiences as teaching team members in Breakthrough:

Surprised that childhood trauma was not at the top; that seems central (T)

Learning how to express emotions was the most powerful; I'm surprised that is not there. (T)

Appreciations: I'm surprised that appreciations is not up there. (EA)

The guys are still quiet around sex. No mention of body, sex and intimacy. (T)

This led, in the teacher's focus group, to some speculation about the need for further curriculum revision:

Maybe we need to look at that, and we can see that we are not doing something right. Maybe we need to revisit the sex weekend. Why end with an anger exercise? Why not end with a love activity. (T)

Maybe it is just too much, and they get overwhelmed. It starts with the one day, and then continues through the weekend. (T)

In general, the teachers agreed that the data underscore the vital importance of BT1:

The climax of the course seems to be the BT I weekend, not the BT 2 weekend.

Boundaries are the basis of this all. Then comes self-esteem... This is just perfect. It really builds clearly on the material, and lays a strong foundation for all the work that follows. This is the key to it all...the foundation for the future work. (T)

Summary

* Boundaries, self-esteem, and inherent nature were identified as the most important concepts learned through Breakthrough.

* A set of concepts relating to a man separating his current feelings from his childhood feelings (adult reality, childhood trauma, adaptive child, carried feelings, etc.) was also acknowledged as key.

* Active listening skills were identified as the most important “tools” that men gained from Breakthrough. Other important skills included “check-ins,” boundaries, awareness of feelings, and appreciations.

Chapter 5.3 Approach to Teaching and Learning

This section complements the preceding account of the course content by focusing on how that content is delivered (roughly, "teaching") and how the participants interact with the content and engage in activities to promote their mastery of it (roughly, "learning"). Before we move onto the detailed findings, here are some typical comments on modes of participation in the Breakthrough workshops:

From the first night, talking with one of the "educators," I knew from the manner in which he listened to me, that he cared deeply about my suffering, and would help me with no judgments or reservations.

I was so impressed at how the educators and allies were non-judgmental and supportive. Their attention was very helpful in healing my wounds of distrust and humiliation from other males in school. I learned about feeling safe.

I appreciated the abundance of information on so many topics and how professionally presented. It became obvious from the start that the information was well researched, refined and presented (verbally and written) so everyone/anyone could understand it, no matter what "learning style" the participant had. I came to appreciate the sequence of the information delivered so that each piece of information obtained had the potential to be used as a tool for subsequent information.

Just one man risking to be vulnerable would open up the whole group to do the same.

The men in my group stayed with me after I told my deepest, darkest secrets; they did not judge or abandon me. They made a safe place for me to feel the depth of my pain, sadness & anger and assisted me through it in a healthy, non-violent way.

SURVEY INSIGHTS ON THE BREAKTHROUGH TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESS

In section 3 of the survey, we asked (item 3.5) the respondents to look over the list of learning approaches from Breakthrough 1 and 2 and to rate them in terms of their importance and strength of impact. As before, this was done by selection from four possible responses:

- 1 = very important or helpful
- 2 = of some importance or help
- 3 = of little importance or help
- Blank = no clear recollection

In addition, we then asked respondents to review the items marked as #1 (very important) and to circle the three most important. We then derived a ranking for the items by calculating 4 points when circled as one of the top 3 choices; 3 points for *very important or helpful*; 2 points for *of some importance or help*; 1 point for *of little importance or help*; and no points when left blank. The outcome may be viewed in Table 5.3.1:

Table 5.3.1: Ranking of learning approaches according to importance

<i>Question 3.5. Look over this list of learning approaches from Breakthrough I and II. Please rate them in terms of importance and strength of impact.</i>						
	Total Pts.	Avg.	# Top 3	# Very	# Some-what	# Little
3.5.7 Small Group Sessioning	519	3.16	64	72	21	5
3.5.3 Retreats, all-day events, weekends	501.5	3.06	52	80	25	3
3.5.20 Listening to each other	497	3.03	22	129	10	2
3.5.2 Demonstrations	494	3.01	38	102	17	2
3.5.8 Exercises to release old feelings	475	2.90	41	85	23	10
3.5.1 Lectures	471	2.87	32	91	33	3
3.5.10 Exercises to separate child, adult and carried feeling states (BT I weekend)	457	2.79	36	83	27	9
3.5.21 Practicing boundaries	447.5	2.73	20	102	28	5
3.5.4 Sharing life stories with other participants	440	2.68	16	94	43	7
3.5.5 Re-experienceing or writing critical life events (7 yr-old boy, etc.)	417	2.54	16	84	44	12
3.5.13 Giving and receiving appreciations	415.5	2.53	12	80	58	11
3.5.11 Daily phone check-ins	391	2.38	23	53	61	18
3.5.9 Physical nurturing	369.5	2.25	14	58	60	19
3.5.6 Visualizations (external boundary)	353	2.15	4	61	69	16
3.5.16 Writing and practicing affirmations	353	2.15	3	63	65	21
3.5.17 Reading handouts	344	2.10	2	58	66	29
3.5.15 Singing	324.5	1.98	6	38	76	34
3.5.18 Listening to recordings	297	1.81	2	41	64	37
3.5.19 Additional reading material	296.5	1.81	4	36	66	40
3.5.12 Homework assignments (empowerment opportunities out of class)	293.5	1.79	0	38	77	25
3.5.14 Poetry, other readings out loud	280.5	1.71	1	26	76	46

The small group sessions stand out at the top of this ranking and, as we shall see, many of the written survey comments and the interview and focus group data support this view. In addition, we would point to the four items which averaged above 3.0 (that is, were invariably regarded as “of great importance” and quite often included in respondents’ top three choices). We see here the continued importance of listening, the value of the extended meetings (all-day and weekend retreats) as providing depth and intensity to the work, and the significance of the demonstrations as the first step into everyone doing the work.

QUALITIES OF TEACHING TEAM (TEACHERS, EDUCATORS, AND ALLIES)

We then asked a series of three questions about the individuals who executed the learning approaches: the teaching team members. We separated two categories by asking first (survey item 3.6) for a list of the key qualities in the teacher(s) which had the most impact on the respondent. Item 3.7 then asked for the same information about the educators/allies; and item 3.8 asked for a description of one personal experience of how one or more of those qualities listed in 3.6 and 3.7 had a direct impact on respondents' growth.

Careful examination of the responses to these three questions led us to a number of categories, which are catalogued below.

“All You Need is Love”

We did note one strong overall theme, however, which we typified as “All you need is love.” For example, when we asked the teaching team members who attended the focus group what they regarded as the secret to a successful small group session (ranked, remember, as of greatest importance in doing the work of Breakthrough), there were three simple answers: *follow the man, listen to the man*, and, above all, *love the man*. This is supported by many comments in the survey data about how well the teaching team members modeled adult male loving behavior. Here is a sample of those insights:

When Fred would have tears and would feel "crying cause you're happy!"

[They] saw my inherent goodness completely—never wavering in seeing my goodness.

Always respectful of others/ Deeply cared/ loved the group

I had a new model of a loving man to see and use as a loose template. I gained a broader view of being male and fully adult.

The unconditional love received from the teacher and many educators was life-changing.

Loving/ all of these men put their lives on hold for hundreds of hours (at least) just to be there and help us!!!/What adjectives do you put on that? See how loving all men can be/accepting/good nature/compassionate

For the first time in my life I was able to enjoy an open loving relationship full of intimacy + love with another man.

Listening and Being Present

Here we see the notion of love being unpacked in terms of caring, compassion, being present, respect, intimacy and lack of conditions. These elements of listening, being present and paying attention were also mentioned frequently as separate elements and thus form our second category. In the words of the survey respondents, this means the “ability to listen with full attention,” the habit of “inviting without being invasive,” being “constantly attentive & reassuring of men in client role.” Of the teaching team members’ ability to listen and be present, one respondent wrote “I’ve never had someone “listen” to me with such presence,” while another

commented on their ability to be “truly . . . non-judgmental,” and to make “a safe environment.” Other comments included the following:

For me, early on in the course, the "listening" that I experienced had a great impact on me. I have always thought I was a good listener, and maybe I was xxxxx what "generally passed for listening in our society—but I feel I have learned to listen on a different level, and that has made a huge difference both at home and at work.

Other comments indicated the result of these attentive qualities and good listening behaviors:

Loving me, holding a space for me, being proud of me, listening to me, encouraging me I started to realize I mattered

From the first night, talking with one of the "educators", I knew from the manner in which he listened to me, that he cared deeply about my suffering, and would help me with no judgments nor reservations.

Non-Judgmental

The third category of responses also overlaps with the emphasis on love and stresses one aspect of the listening behaviors, namely the ability to be non-judgmental. Comments here stressed the “full and complete support” and “loving kindness” demonstrated by the teaching team. This, according to one respondent “made me feel safe to do healing,” while “their loving, but non-judgmental presence” made possible “their support of the sense of community.” It is also clear that the non-judgmental listening and clear attention giving skill included the effective modeling of boundaries. Comments here include:

When I was sharing my deepest childhood fears and expressing anger and venting about family members it was critical to have a non-judgmental listener who had the ability to remain present while I was discharging.

I was so impressed at how the educators and allies were non-judgmental and supportive. Their attention was very helpful in healing my wounds of distrust and humiliation from other males in prep school. I learned about feeling safe.

Again, the comments also point to the consequences of these qualities:

Because I was not judged and because I felt loved I was able to learn how to be gentle and loving with myself. This changed my inner life completely.

The teacher's and educator's acceptance of me w/o judgment enabled me to do some significant anger release work, & carried feeling work, & re birthing work, all of which has increased my self worth & self esteem.

Deep Knowledge of the Material (Men and Socialization)

A fourth characteristic we found in these data is the teaching team's deep knowledge of the material, seen as “wisdom about men and human conditioning.” One respondent reported that

“enthusiasm and confidence in the volume and knowledge were important for keeping my attention and building my willingness to participate.” Another saw this feature in the teacher’s verbal behavior, noting that they “really knew how to measure (choice of words) language to better interpret the messages.” Other comments here:

Dealing w/ rage on a weekend, trusting the knowledge and judgment and care of the leader allowed me to experience the rage fully! To process and heal it. The other men were present as allies.

I appreciated the abundance of information on so many topics and how professionally presented. It became obvious from the start that the information was well researched, refined and presented (verbally and written) so everyone/anyone could understand it, no matter what "learning style" the participant had. I came to appreciate the sequence of the information delivered so that each piece of information obtained had the potential to be used as a tool for subsequent information.

Approachability and Fallibility

A fifth feature of the teaching team members was identified as their humanity: their approachability and fallibility. The various nuances around this include the teaching team’s “willingness to expose their own issues” and “attentiveness—willing to support without judgment acceptance of traumas.” One respondent saw how they “provided a framework for me to challenge myself w/ out usual male hierarchical pecking order fears” and their “willingness to be vulnerable and able to keep great boundaries, playfulness.” Of one teacher, a respondent wrote: “He also would have moments of realization and would share them or appreciate profound insights from others. Leadership remarkable!” Another reported that the “teacher shared his experiences of early childhood violence and trauma and shame and how it related to damaged adult reality.” Other comments:

When I could see that I was accepted no matter what, it helped me to feel safe enough to heal, to share my childhood abuse, to be totally real/present.

Willingness to expose their own issues attentiveness—willing to support without judgment acceptance of traumas

Excellent Presenters and Communicators

In more technical terms, the teachers were seen as outstanding presenters. They are seen as “giving life to the material NOT just lecturing!!” One respondent wrote: “His teaching style is indescribable. He somehow managed to convey information that no one ever discussed or has yet to describe & or qualify. It was easy to be a good listener.” Many commented on the effective demonstrations and the clarity in presenting the material. It is clear that skills include “articulating the key concepts in a clear, concise, and organized way which had a very clear objective.” Other characteristics included a sense of humor, a sense of theater and good story telling skills.

One specific aspect of this communicative ability relates to the expression of feeling states. This clearly involves the ability to show and express feelings while describing and demonstrating

issues and techniques. One respondent noted the “teachers’ ability to show love, compassion, empathy & to feel their feelings as an example.” This is closely related to a further feature, compassion, which includes, according to respondents, tenderness, acceptance, physical affection and touch, empathetic listening (again) and availability (again). This is seen in survey data such as the following:

In a small group session, feeling very frightened to express anger and knowing, or at least feeling I knew to feel safe, trusting the educators to guide me, to steer me gently in the direction I wanted to go up to, but was too afraid to go alone.

With one educator, he was so loving, he gave me the space and guidance to cry openly and not feel ashamed.

In smaller session groups—, the compassion that educators gave to the individuals—was extraordinary. An absolute commitment to be present.

Flexibility

While all these characteristics obviously apply to all the participants in a particular group, the capabilities of the teaching team also include a flexibility, the willingness and ability to adapt their approach to individual differences and needs. Respondents noted, for example, how teaching team members were seen “supporting each person no matter where their feelings led” and “working hard to support each of us.” Another comment identified “their ability to adjust a lesson to work for each and every man.” Related comments include:

Educator let me do session in my own way, and told me to skip class the following week if I needed to. I considered dropping out, but didn't, because educator made me feel safe

[In one of the] Weekend [retreats], an educator was putting me thru the expression of rage process, which was just not working. The teacher came in & took over with a calm, tender gentleness from below—& the floodgates opened.

This last comment indicates that the flexibility includes a willingness to step aside for a colleague to take over and the complementary openness to stepping in and taking over when a colleague is not making the appropriate progress or finding the needed breakthrough. This suggests a further trait, an intuitive sensitivity, seen as “the ability to sense and be attentive to triggers (their own and others), intuition.” As one respondent wrote: “[he] knew when to place gentle pressure when a crack opened.” Similar comments include:

Teacher using me as a demo during session 4 or 5 & picking the right time for me to "really go for it" helped me & helped the group through my demo of the experience.

ROLE OF THE GROUP IN FACILITATING LEARNING

While the teaching team clearly has the responsibility for creating the opportunities for learning and growth, our preliminary interview data also suggest that the participation and support of the other men in the group are crucial to the growth and success of each individual. To explore, this, we asked survey respondents to write down the key characteristics and behaviors of the other participants that had the most positive impact (survey item 3.9). Again (item 3.10), we also

asked for a personal experience to illustrate how these characteristics or behaviors had a direct impact on their growth.

As before, we carefully assembled these data and then sorted them into categories. While there is again a good deal of overlap, we are confident that the following stand up as identifiably distinct. Many of these, of course, are similar or identical to those characteristics identified in the teaching team members.

Give and Receive Support and Attention

The first is the ability to give and receive support and attention; to be open and vulnerable; and to be non-judgmental and accepting. Respondents commented on their colleagues' openness in sharing their ideas, feeling and pain, being vulnerable and in being non-judgmental. Typical comments included these:

As the weeks passed it deeply affected me to see the flowering of beautiful men becoming willing to be vulnerable, real and honest with the rest of us. As the guards came down, the men became safe, genuine.

The men in my group stayed with me after I told my deepest darkest secrets; they did not judge or abandon me; They made a safe place for me to feel the depth of my pain, sadness & anger and assisted me through it in a healthy, non-violent way.

When other men were initially brave enough to express strong, intense emotion in front of the group it inspired me to move emotionally too. That others could witness my hurts gently and loving.

The calmness and sense of presence that finally was achieved by the whole group (big & small) so that we could experience our "beingness" with each other. We didn't feel compelled to have to do anything. Lack of competition.

The non-judgmental affirming support. Their willingness to be honest and vulnerable in my presence. Their willingness and ability to facilitate my feelings and expressing of my feelings.

Just one man risking to be vulnerable would open up the whole group to do the same.

The life story telling to one on one outside class was one of the most impactful events I had with another man. Their willingness to tell the truth + be vulnerable brought me home + gave me hope for a new world.

Personal sharing drew me to those who shared—more than a feeling of camaraderie; intimacy on a male to male XXXX seldom-experienced in my life.

Nearly every small group session I had was made more powerful by witnessing the honesty, openness, courage and stories of others' past XXXX and of their truth.

In our self led meetings after BT 2, I was really stressed with multiple issues (separated from wife, father was dying, son was in trouble with the law). They just nurtured me, held me, loved me... The distress seemed to diminish + fade as their love just poured in.

Being witness to another man re-experiencing a boyhood trauma, overcoming it and then coming away with new insights. This just gave me the courage to do the same for myself.

During a retreat I had a conversation with one of the guys in my group. He had not gained all my trust yet and I was still guarding myself from something, after all he was a man and it looked very much like my tormentors. He told me that he wished he would have been there with me as a child and protect me and help me during my abuse. This was full of love and compassion and sincerity. After this event we became closer.

During a workshop retreat I agreed to close my eyes and relive a childhood experience in front of the entire group. When I finished and opened my eyes I found everyone supporting me and I believe that was an important turning point in my life.

Developing Trust and a Safe Space

A second category can be established in terms of trust and the development of a safe environment. Again, the teaching team is seen as taking the lead and providing the initial model. But the participants again have a strong role, as seen in comments on their willingness to trust and be present, their ability to create a safe atmosphere, and their compassion. Typical comments celebrated this emerging trust: “The process of establishing group trust grew steadily week by week; each of us inspiring the others by our trust through demonstrations and small group work;” “Loving encouragement and an almost prayerful & hopeful environment was created;” “Their willingness to trust the support and love of the group by taking huge risks in examining their own vulnerability.” Here are some more extended comments:

Support and safety were critical for me opening up in the group. Once I knew the safety and support was there, I then knew that the only one holding me back from expressing myself fully was me and my early hurts and strategies for coping. It really helped identify early hurts and strategies and work with them.

Numerous times, friends' appreciation after check ins and small group sessions made me aware that they understood how I was dealing with feelings and that helped me to increase my confidence that I could heal them.

I learned my own value as a skilled loving man when I saw I was able to assist other men through their own difficult trauma. I got to see my awareness as not just self-serving, but as an important gift of and to community.

During the first weekend retreat (BT1) because of the safety/trust in my group, I was able to discuss and understand periods of shame in my childhood and see how they have come to affect me in the present—without the safety trust, I would not have been able to verbalize those issues.

Truly Listening to Each Other

Again, listening without judgment is a crucial feature, as BT men celebrate in the survey data each other's ability to "get out of their heads and truly listen" and giving "complete undivided attention and physical support." The lack of judgment appears over and over in the survey data and the focus group discussions, as in "you realize how rarely people truly listen to you; being non-judgmental; performance anxiety is present in almost all day-to-day interactions—I feel I am always being judged." Similar comments include the following:

I felt that I was really noticed for the first time ever. I believed that I was truly good and truly complete.

When I learned to listen without judgment I developed love for other men in the group That I did not like at first. I was able to see this inherent nature

In small groups or self-led groups, other men were able to know how to support you to do your own work—by listening to you—they would be able to ask the questions that helped me go deeper. We got to know each other—we reached a level of intimacy.

I learned to empty my mind and shut off all the noise...so I really heard what was going on with the person talking to me. This contributed enormously to my effectiveness as a parent and in my profession. As I began to understand my inherent goodness, I could see it in others and xxxxx them accordingly. This has had an enormously positive impact on others...and has generally brought up the light/ fun side of my nature.

Consistency and Commitment

One obvious concomitant aspect to the building of trust and the establishment of effective communication and listening behaviors is consistency and commitment to the process. Typical survey responses noted the participants' "willingness to keep coming each week to commit to themselves & to the group," "willingness to stick to the process," and the consistent holding of "a safe, non-judgmental space for me." This consistency then leads to comments like this:

My allies are so enthusiastic and certain about my abilities to grow heal, and prosper that I can never forget—they simply won't let me forget my goodness.

Discovering Commonality

We have noted at several points that BT participants quickly realize that they have a great deal in common. Phrases like "common life stories" and "common journeys" appear a lot in all data sets. In the survey responses, we found comments such as: "We all had issues and hurts we wanted to heal—we had a shared goal and commitment." "That we are one a similar path and it creates a sacred bond." Longer comments included:

Early on when we shared our histories, the fact that each man's story was completely unique, yet every man's head was nodding to acknowledge "Yeah, I know what he's saying." This was a powerful message, that I was not alone, which allowed me to feel safer to show me."

We all knew we were in this together with mostly similar problems. We were together as buddies solving our problems, speaking to each other as only men do with each other.

One of the prime revelations of the Breakthrough experience was the realization that men—straight or gay or bisexual—have more in common than I ever realized. There is only a shadow-line that separates us.

The honesty—seeing the men I considered to be “masculine” having the same fears and problems I did helped me to see the suffering we all endured because of male-role conditioning. I saw I was not alone, and that I wasn't broken.

Sharing in a small group we realized that even though we had wildly different up-bringsings (gay vs. straight; fundamentalist Christian vs. Jewish; urban vs. rural) we were dealing with the same stuff. I felt totally connected to this man in a powerful way.

I learned I was not alone in my suffering and that all the men had a little boy who got 'fucked over' as they grew up. I was amazed at my own and their capacity to forge workable lives despite enormous handicaps of carried pain.

Summary

* Survey respondents identified the small-group listening partnerships (“sessioning”) as the most important teaching and learning strategy. They also identified the day-long and weekend workshops as critical to their growth.

* The core of the Breakthrough pedagogy is creating a loving, non-judgmental space for men to grow and heal. The “teaching team” serves as a powerful real-life example of adult male love.

* The group itself plays a powerful role in creating a safe, non-judgmental space for the men. The men discover their commonality and shared humanness, and remind each other of their worth and value.

Chapter 5.4 General Impact of the Program

What is the impact of Breakthrough? In one word: **transformative**.

Listen to the voices of a few of the men...

At the orientation they said that it would improve my parenting skills. The promise is 100% true. It does make you a better parent. I'm much more aware of passing on all my carried crap that I was given, and can interrupt it. That's the big gift of BT.

The more I put in, the more I get out. Volunteering at every opportunity that I can possibly get. And the gifts that I get out of that are huge and miraculous. I could never have expected that life could be this good in a few short years. (AV)

It changed my life. One of the best things that ever happened to me. Before, BT, there was a lot of stress and fear. My life was being run by fear, and a lot of self-loathing. Now, I can remember telling a friend that I was now loving myself, and I felt that I knew how to be a father, and to be a better husband. Learning ways to relieve my distress other than yelling or slamming doors and leaving. I can love myself.

My experience with the program was magnificent. I feel personally that BT should be core curriculum in every high school in the country and then eventually the world, and I mean core curriculum being every day - because we are not taught, I was not taught how to nurture myself. BT introduced that concept to me, and it was up to me in my heart to carry on with and, with the help of me and my brothers, I have been able to teach myself how to nurture and care for myself. (AV)

I had been a pastor for many years but it was through Breakthrough that I found the Spiritual and Emotional healing that I had always been seeking. It was here that I finally was able to finally reconcile my spirituality and sexuality. At one time I told Fred [the Founder] "this is what the church should be about."

Breakthrough provided me a step-by-step, solid approach to handling some core male and human issues in a solid, integral, loving way. I felt like I mattered in my group and could see consistent progress in both myself and my other group members on a weekly basis. The permission to be affectionate and loving with myself and other men has been invaluable.

It gave me a wonderful vehicle to show commitment, love and respect to myself. I was able to show up for ME in a way that was reserved for all others. Through that commitment I experienced phenomenal growth, fun and re-met a great and intelligent guy—ME. Just what I asked for.

I felt that Breakthrough was giving me the tools and self confidence I needed to become happier and more satisfied with myself and to make better decisions. It was a path that I

needed and could follow. Breakthrough offered me hope, a way out of chaos, frustration and hopelessness.

A safe environment to address my deepest fears. There was a hope that I could recover from the horrible oppression I had been raised to learn, that I could learn to love myself and others. That I could rid myself of the rage that lived so deeply inside me. I found that I was slowly becoming more present and alive for myself, a huge awakening occurred! The level of fear began to fade away....

I have lived a life of loneliness, solitude, fear and distrust of practically everyone; I saw that breakthrough was a touchstone upon which I could make deep and manifest changes that would end the loneliness and distrust.

Leader's ability to reveal, explain, create safety for and fearlessly face mountainously huge personal pain and terror, I had not experienced this EVER previously. Breakthrough radiated Hope and relief from pain. B.T. told truth to me—if I was willing to risk opening up, it would promise to be a safety net, and I could break my silence and isolation. I got LOVE, I got witnessed, I was part of communal creative event.

I really wanted to change the way I felt about myself and wanted to stop relying on others to gain my sense of self. It felt like a weight had been lifted off of my back. I also felt connected to other men in the group as we were all there to overcome the things in our life that held us back from being truly free.

EXTENT OF IMPACT

The survey asked the men to rate the extent to which Breakthrough has brought about change in their lives, on a scale from “none” to “enormous.” We debated what would be the right word for the transformative end of the scale. We hesitated to use “enormous.” It seemed like a big word, that has lots of meaning; perhaps the men would feel intimidated to use “enormous” to describe their own transformation. We were wrong.

Table 5.4.1

<i>Question 3.1: How would you characterize the extent to which Breakthrough has brought about change in your life?</i>		
	Number	Percent
None	0	0%
Very Slight	4	2%
Some	11	7%
Considerable	66	40%
Enormous	83	51%
Considerable or Enormous		91%

40% of the respondents stated that the extent of the change was “considerable;” while 51% said that the extent of change was “enormous.” That makes 91% of the sample stating that Breakthrough had a considerable or enormous impact on their lives.

DESCRIPTION OF INDIVIDUAL TRANSFORMATION

Men were given the opportunity to specifically describe the change that they felt had occurred, by completing the sentence, “at the beginning of Breakthrough, I _____; but by the end, I _____.” Six major threads were identified in the responses to this question. The major themes are:

- Self-esteem, self-confidence, self-knowledge.
- Moving from isolation, hopelessness, and depression to feeling connected, hopeful and empowered.
- Ability to identify and express emotions.
- Ability to deal with issues of anger.
- Overcoming fear.
- Awareness of *boundaries*.

While we attempted to separate the themes as distinct areas of growth, in reality, they are often intermingled in the responses. For example, the following quote includes issues of self-esteem, anger, isolation, and fear:

At the beginning of Breakthrough, I felt lonely, angry and afraid of men, but by the end I felt more self-esteem and less fear of men.

Self-Esteem, Self-Confidence, and Self-Knowledge

52 statements were in the area of **self-esteem, self-confidence, identity, self-knowledge**. For example:

At the beginning of Breakthrough, I was very dependent on external input, but by the end, I could value myself independent of external input.

... I was anxious much of the time . . . I was much more comfortable in my own skin.

... I was definitely introverted and shy. . . I am happier, more content, confident and comfortable in myself.

The thing that came to me was my value. Before BT, you know, I could go to a meeting or not, but it doesn't matter if I do because they won't even know if I'm not there. I learned that wasn't true. To isolate, that was my most wonderful, wonderful talent that I developed. And learning my inherent value, both within myself and what I could give to the group. And by giving to the group, how much I could get from the group. And just that little nuance for me, it was to combat fear. . . to combat that it didn't matter if I was there or not. And learning, realizing, recognizing that that was not true was wonderful. (AV)

Overcoming Isolation and Depression

43 statements mentioned being **isolated, hopeless depressed or powerless** before BT and **connected, hopeful and empowered** afterwards. For example:

At the beginning of Breakthrough, I felt isolated; but by the end, I felt I had a circle of sincere friends I could count on.

... I felt alone & broken & helpless & depressed ... I was learning to allow connection with other men, believed I was inherently good and knew I really did have a say.

... I was isolated and self-medicated frequently ... I learned to try and stay connected and live a more balanced life.

... I would isolate and hide ... I got support from other people and could take care of myself.

Able to Identify and Express Emotions

36 statements related to **identifying and expressing emotions**. For example:

At the beginning of Breakthrough, I would bottle everything up, get quiet and be passive; but by the end, I was able to feel and express my true emotions and be more real with people.

... I had huge difficulty identifying my feelings, let alone expressing them ... I could readily identify and expose them.

... I had difficulty communicating to others my feelings ... I could feel & explain in a thoughtful manner.

What was important to me was the recognition and acknowledgement and, actually, the encouragement to have feelings other than shame or anger. That's all I grew up with, you know. I don't know even if joy was something that was present in my life, you know. Just to know that I could grieve. That grieving was OK and so was fear. That's just huge for me.
(AV)

Anger

27 statements dealt with issues of **anger**. For example:

At the beginning of Breakthrough, I yelled and was often passive-aggressive; but by the end, I do it rarely.

... I got angry without understanding why ... I was able to understand where the anger and hurt came from and deal with it more appropriately.

... I was angry, confused, upset, raging, mad, controlling, bitter desperate for change ... I was more calm, less agitated, judgmental and fearful and more able to feel my feelings as feelings.

Fear

22 statements expressed issues of **fear**. For example:

At the beginning of Breakthrough, I was anxious much of the time; but by the end, I felt

much more comfortable in my own skin.

... I felt afraid ... I was grateful and blessed to be in such a different space—words are hard to describe what Breakthrough has done.

... I was scared and afraid of men ... I was more accepting of myself, more open and loving.

... I was terrified of men ... I had many loving relationships with men.

Boundaries

19 statements were about men's ability to recognize and use an effective system of personal **boundaries** with regard to their emotional world. For example:

At the beginning of Breakthrough, I had no boundaries and allowed others to dictate my behavior and feelings; but by the end, I had a good sense of myself and could stand up to others' anger and expectations

... I had no information or understand of healthy boundaries ... I had in place a solid boundary system.

DESCRIPTION OF THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE GROUP

As described earlier, the group is an important dimension of Breakthrough's pedagogy. In addition, creating a community of men capable of interacting in ways that do not reinforce isolation, fear, and dominance associated with the socialized male role, is a distinct goal of BMC. To gain insight into the transformation of the group, the survey asked the men to describe how the group changed, using a similar "*At the beginning, we...but at the end, we...*" framework.

I can show my anger, I can state my anger, and I can let it go. You know, it's a feeling, it's not controlling me. That was basically from being in a group of men like we are. That helped me heal. (AV)

Seven major themes emerged as the respondents described the change they felt in the group:

- From isolation to **deep connection**
- From superficial to deeply **meaningful engagement**
- From suspicion and fear to **deep trust**.
- From silent and self-conscious to **communicative**
- We had **value and mattered**
- From heavy and intense to **light and fun**.
- Embracing **physical contact**

From separate and isolated in individual issues TO close-knit family with common issues

The words "family" and "connected" were used frequently by the men to describe the emerging feeling within

To see men engage in these behaviors, which is being so tight and constricted and cover up so much, and see them flower and bloom and come out of their shells. And to see how much compassion and kindness and beauty and intelligence that every man had. That I would have not been able to see, without faith in the inherent nature. It's just, it's just an inspiring thing to see. To see a man come out and become a human. (AV)

the group. This is especially powerful given BT men's history of isolation and withdrawal. Examples include:

At the beginning of Breakthrough, we were pretty closed off from each other; but by the end of Breakthrough, we were like the loving, caring family or brother I'd always wanted.

...we were individuals looking for direction;... we were a community that trusted each other to catch us if/when we fell.

...we were individuals on a journey; ...we were a group of people who supported and loved one another

...we thought isolation was protection from attack; ... we found security in openness within the group/non-judgmental.

...we were damaged strangers bravely facing our biggest fears; we were supportive, loving friends who bravely shared one of life's greatest adventures together.

...we were isolated by the illusion of unique personal pain(s) no one else could understand; we saw our common experience, our aspirations and our need for love was the same.

...we were separated by our individual, and collective suffering/fully supported each other on the path to end our suffering

*...we were suspicious strangers, "contained" and greatly self controlled (in a lifeless way);
...we were brothers, free, full of love, of life and each other*

...we were frustrated "cogs" in some "great alienating wheel"; ...we were fully "alive" individuals, participating as positive proponents in our own lives, and community, and of course, thusly the planet.

...we were victims, cold, bitter, sad, angry, mad, hurt; ...we had learned to love ourselves, open up and trust others

From superficial, surface connections TO very deep connections

The men highlighted the depth of their emerging connections with each other, often in comparison with the superficiality of their previous relations with men. Highlights include:

I had some point in my life, as a little kid, I had realized or decided that I was alone in my life. As a little kid, like three year old, like "I'm on my own here." And that was such a stressful decision, or realization, that I coped with it. But what BT, I mean, the key for me, was to be around men I trusted, to be physically touched by people I trusted, and go through my stuff, and see that it could actually get out of my system.. That being alone was my basic truth, was that I was alone, was way too stressful, and I just couldn't heal from that. As soon as I wasn't alone, it was easy – so easy I couldn't believe how easy it was – to get my stuff out. That was the big how-I-could heal. I do that all the time now. (AV)

At the beginning of Breakthrough, we couldn't/wouldn't go deep into our true personal lives. But by the end, we were searching out opportunities to share our deepest feelings, pain, longings.

...we communicated outside of the group at a very superficial level;... we had profound & meaningful interactions.

...we were scared, competitive and shallow; ...we felt safe together, respected and supported each other, and had intimate relationships

From suspicion, fear and distance TO deep trust

Trust emerged as a frequently used word, and is clearly a critical component of the transformation that occurred in the group. Examples include:

At the beginning of Breakthrough, we were tentative, distrusting, nervous + suspicious of each other. But by the end, we saw that each of us was truly innocent, loving, caring, and deserving.

...we were closed, defensive + stand offish with each other;...we began to trust, be vulnerable and intimate with each other.

...we didn't trust many people and were still stuck in a "macho" role; ...we all felt comfortable crying in front of men we didn't know more than six months

...we purposely separated ourselves to hide inadequacies and cover pain; ...we exposed ourselves, felt pain together, bonded, arose feeling victories

...we held back, didn't participate, felt above it all at first; ...we wallowed in our shared pains and grew from this, opened hugely from this. We felt secure in the created space, where at first we were hesitant.

...we were afraid of each other and guarded; ...we became friends and found a common thread; joy of just "hanging out" together

From hung up and self-conscious TO deeply feeling and committed to communicating

The men also emphasized the power of free-flowing, authentic communication that characterized the group. This is in stark contrast to the self-conscious state of being fearful of truly exposing oneself. Examples include:

At the beginning of Breakthrough, we seemed intellectual and preoccupied with terminology;

I recall realizing how much I mattered to the group. You know, when I wasn't there, it wasn't just that I wasn't there, but that I was deeply missed. My presence was missed. And I was an important part of that group, any group. That I really mattered - to the guy sitting to the left of me, and to the right of me, I mattered to them. And that kind of drove me to coming more often. (AV)

but by the end, we seemed feeling respectful, thoughtful and committed to communicating.

...we were uptight and slow to speak; ...we could hardly wait our turn.

...we all were judging and nervous in our minds, when we talked on breaks it was always "guy stuff";...we were greeting with real interest in the other men, with empathy, and connecting on a nurturing level

...we rarely touched or listened or heard ourselves in any degree of intimacy; ...we learned about caring, nurturing, and how to be men in a less confrontational and reactive or homophobic manner.

...we were separate, confused and by ourselves; ...we were together, committed to expressing feelings and growing together by showing up

From learners with little value TO knowledge holders with value

Respondents also acknowledged that they recognized the knowledge and value that each other possessed. For example:

At the beginning of Breakthrough, we were eager to learn; but at the end of Breakthrough, we were eager to share our knowledge

...we had little compassion for ourselves, expected to treat others with more respect than what we expected for ourselves; ...we enhanced our sense of self worth, equal to that which we had for each other.

...we did not know how much each of us mattered; ...we truly knew that each one of us mattered greatly

...we were confused about our lives and living in relative isolation; ...we attained clarity and love for one another

...we were confused, lost, spinning our wheels; ...we were aware of our strengths, loving nature and walked away with a greater understanding of our own personal lives and as a group we shared this awareness together.

From heavy and intense TO light and fun

A number of respondents focused on the lightness and humor that emerged in the group. For example:

At the beginning of Breakthrough, we all seemed to carry a heavy weight of anger or sadness; but by the end of Breakthrough, we displayed a lighter outlook and are able to laugh more easily.

...we were a group of intense & insecure men; ...we were intensely passionate about being alive and in control of our destiny

...we were uptight but very needy; ...we were relaxed and much more fulfilled

...we created safety and openness bit by bit, treading over feelings; ...we burst like sunflowers into raucous, expressive joyful, fluid beings, relieved at ending past hurts.

...we were cynical, hopeless, closed-up; ...we opened up, lived in the present, listened and enjoyed others

From fear of physical contact TO embracing physical contact and connection

Finally, a number of men commented on the quality of physical contact and physical connection. Again, coming into the program with homophobic fears of embracing other men, this transformation is especially noteworthy. Examples include:

At the beginning of Breakthrough, we were uncomfortable in touching, hugging each other; but by the end of Breakthrough, we exchanged touches, hugging freely, openly, honestly

...we never touched, never hugged; ...we were sitting in each other's laps, embracing like cousins (family) on the couch!

...we were anxious about being affectionate with each other; ...we were able to hug comfortably

...we were timid about physical contact and masculinity at ending past hurts; ...we embraced easily with no agendas, understood contact as real need and simple wants and pleasures, sharing each awareness as a group.

...we were uncomfortable with male-to-male physical closeness; ...we were a hug-happy touchy-feely group of guys.

...we were hard and knobby; ...we were soft and fuzzy.

...we did not see one another; ...we sought to look into each other's eyes longer

If you look cumulatively at the different themes, what it adds up to is LOVE and ACCEPTANCE. This is expressed well by one of the participants at the Fathers of sons focus group:

I felt that I was sort of faking it; acting how I was supposed to act; but the older I got, the harder it was to do that. Didn't have any comfort with my mate, wasn't able to share any of my fears. In BT, I felt safety, and love, and acceptance for who I was. Once I got that, I was off, then I had the power to make some changes. But until I really got that in myself, I was crippled, hopeless; I was all those things: helpless, powerless, etcetera. But

the thing that allowed me to turn the corner was the feeling of being loved and accepted by the group. That was the switch. (FS)

TRANSFORMATION OF BEHAVIOR AND ATTITUDES

Clearly, behavioral transformation is a core goal of BMC. Ultimately, the goal is for men to live more healthy, fulfilling lives, and to have richer, more meaningful relationships. This means new ways of acting in the world. However, research in domestic violence prevention recognizes that ultimately, the goal of the programs is both a change in men's behaviors and a change in their attitudes. Both are important. It has been recognized that without a change of attitude, behavioral changes can sometimes represent men's awareness of how to manipulate and dominate, in less violent, but equally as destructive, ways.

The survey therefore asked the men to rate both their changes in behaviors and attitudes. Respondents were asked to review a list of attitudes and a list of behaviors, and rate their personal transformation on a scale of 1 to 10. The men were then given the opportunity to provide specific examples of the most significant behavioral and attitudinal changes.

Shifts in Behavior

Table 5.4.2 records the respondents indication of the extent of behavioral change that occurred as a result of Breakthrough. Clustered at the top of the list with an average rating between 7.36 and 7.16 are behaviors that are clearly at the core of the Breakthrough content. They are:

- Actions toward (behavior with) men
- Expression of feelings
- Approach to taking care of myself
- Response to the stimulation of old hurts (distress)
- Expression of adult love
- Dealing with other people's emotions
- Appreciating others and joyfully celebrating their success
- Being true to myself in relationships
- Not being controlled by my old fears

At the bottom of the list, clustered between 6.19 and 4.88 are behaviors that are less central to the core of the Breakthrough content. These include:

- Being less self-centered and more generous
- Controlling or limiting addictive behaviors
- Actions in the workplace
- Controlling or limiting violent, abusive behaviors
- Actions toward (behavior with) my children

This also gives some insight into the fact that drug/alcohol addiction and domestic violence are not the dominant themes that men come to Breakthrough to address. In addition, the fact that "actions toward (behavior with) my children" is at the bottom of the list is also indicative of the fact that only 63% of the respondents are fathers.

Table 5.4.2

<i>Question 4.3. Change in Behavior. (1 = not changed; 10 = changed completely)</i>		
Behavior	Total	Avg.
Actions toward (behavior with) men	1207.5	7.36
Expression of feelings	1207.5	7.36
Approach to taking care of myself	1204	7.34
Response to the stimulation of old hurts (distress)	1184	7.22
Expression of adult love	1177	7.18
Dealing with other people’s emotions (anger, sadness, etc.).	1175	7.39
Appreciating others and joyfully celebrating their success	1156	7.27
Being true to myself in relationships	1147	7.21
Not being controlled by my old fears	1139	7.16
Communication skills	1112	6.78
Satisfying own needs in a healthy way	1100.5	6.92
Actions toward (behavior with) women	1098.5	6.70
Expression of anger	1092.5	6.66
Actions toward (behavior with) my spouse or significant other	1079	6.58
Actions which contribute to the fulfillment of my dreams	1046	6.58
Approach to problem-solving	1045.5	6.38
Being less self-centered and more generous	985	6.19
Controlling or limiting addictive behaviors	934.5	5.88
Actions in the workplace	923	5.63
Controlling or limiting violent, abusive behaviors	805	5.06
Actions toward (behavior with) my children	801	4.88
Other (please describe)	99	0.60

The examples that the men cite when asked to describe their most significant changes in behavior give a rich sense of the actual impact of the program. One surprise emerged. Though the number one behavioral change cited on the list is “actions toward (behavior with) men,” the most frequently described examples relate to “action toward (behavior with) my spouse or significant other.” 27 men provided an example of how their behavior with their spouse/significant other has changed. This category was firmly in the middle of the list of responses, but elicited the most examples of explicit behavior change. In addition, “actions

toward (behavior with) my children” elicited a relatively high number of examples, considering it received the lowest average score. Clearly, this indicates the impact that Breakthrough has on a man's familial relations.

One additional note—five men chose to describe behavioral change specific to the workplace, indicating that they have gone from passive observers to active leaders in the workplace.

Representative examples of the men's responses about the most significant behavioral changes follow.

Actions toward (behavior with) my spouse or significant other (27 responses)

Able to confront my wife more directly; not let things just sit bottled up inside me.

I now see my spouse and other women as a team member to be cherished and cared for like all others. Not sex objects. Or the conquest. Or less than.

My spouse was most often the recipient of the effects of my suppressed anger and low self-esteem. This was mostly expressed in irritability and withdrawal. Our time spent together is now much more open and loving.

My wife is physically disabled as a consequence of self-abusive behavior (morbidly overweight lead to vertebral collapse + loss of mobility). I am no longer angry with her over this. I was looking for a woman to replace my wife + very confused about this. I now have several excellent women friends + more male friends, but no romantic relationship other than with my wife

Actions toward (behavior with) men (17 responses)

I found it much easier to get to know men. I discovered an intuition for this.

My actions towards men are now more compassionate, open and nurturing.

I am much less afraid to show affection to other men. I have become closer with these men. More comfortable with it.

I am not afraid of other men the way I have been in the past. I'm not afraid to approach them.

Expression of feelings (17 responses)

I did hurt: I am able to feel feelings and identify them; understand the hurt which was triggered. This is important

I am more expressive of feelings and a better communicator/listener.

"Expression of feelings"—didn't think I could truly feel before BT; now I can feel. More than one feeling at a time and still function well.

I can now express deep, long-held feelings. Needs & hungers that I've always buried before. I see so much more clearly into my own heart.

Approach to taking care of myself (15 responses)

I am much better at taking care of myself & I experience so much less depression

Taking "excellent" self care is all important to functioning fully as a caring, contributing adult.

The theme for my Breakthrough 3 group is "practicing exquisite self-care." We discuss it, support each other in it and are learning to live it. That's my approach to taking care of myself. It's GOOD.

Expression of adult love (14 responses)

Towards others: myself. The love was always there, now more aware of it & comfortable in expressing it

I just love. I never really appreciated other people much. I do now. I appreciate them because I love myself.

I formerly confused love with affections & feelings of happiness about a person. Redefining "love" as a commitment to a kind of relationship has been very freed-up my emotional life. It's created a wider range of possibilities for me to "love" people. Better understanding others' feelings has made it easier to relate to them & deal with the behavior.

Being true to myself in relationships (14 responses)

Being true to myself; leads to many other positive changes, like avoiding over commitment by being able to say "NO" when appropriate.

I don't try to be a people pleaser.

Honesty is now a measure of mental health

Relationships are more fulfilling because I'm honest with myself and others.

Communication skills (14 responses)

I am a better communicator/listener.

I appreciate men and women more. I listen better and respond more appropriately.

I've been married for seven years now and would describe my marriage as happy, healthy, fulfilling and joyous. Great communication and real concern for each other as partners and friends. I could not have done this w/o Breakthrough. I was too afraid and my self-esteem was too low.

Not being controlled by my old fears (13 responses)

Allowing what is has taken away my anxiety level by at least 50%

I am more secure in myself, so I have less fear about exposing my feelings to others—I can let people in.

Coming to an understanding of pseudo reality/victim states/etc—that whole string of concepts—is, I realized my pathway out of so much fear→this to, a work in progress, but I'm optimistic.

I now can recognize my old fears, old feelings and I am able to let them pass through me rather than acting on them.

Response to the stimulation of old hurts (distress) (13 responses)

I can now witness my distress as an observer, see it as a possible less and recover in a minute (it used to take days).

Old hurts—I understand their source and can nurture myself around them.

I am keenly aware of the sensation and onset of negative emotions and have honed my ability to make prudent choices in terms of my response to negative feelings situations and interactions

Actions toward (behavior with) my children (13 responses)

More patience with my kids. I can see when I am being quick to judge, or not honest with my own needs.

I have become a much better parent—more honest, open, loving, and caring. The parent-child roles are much less. I can now let other people have their emotions, not take them in, and not try to "fix" them.

I have become much more loving and supportive (withholding judgment & advice) with my spouse & especially my children I have all but eliminated any abusive behavior towards others and myself

Controlling or limiting addictive behaviors (10 responses)

I have been able to decrease the stimulation of some unwanted sexual desires.

stopped drinking totally—10 plus yrs!

I have not used drugs or alcohol in over 20 years. I am not eating food with obsession

Controlling or limiting addictive behaviors has changed a lot. I believe that most of them were related to my lack of self-esteem.

Dealing with other people's emotions (anger, sadness, etc.). (10 responses)

I am better able to deal with other's behavior and distress. I can use my boundaries.

Recently and since Breakthrough, I have experienced a change in dealing with someone angry with me—rather than becoming reactive, defensive, & angry and taking it personally, I have become able to occasionally listen to them, not react, stay calm and hear and answer them in an adult manner.

I have learned that I do not need other peoples old hurts. My reality is unaffected by other peoples emotions.

Appreciating others and joyfully celebrating their success (7 responses)

I am able to openly & honestly Appreciate And celebrate other men's successes. I am able to do that without thinking of me.

Appreciating others & their successes—I used to have a harder time with this (b/c I wanted the success). Now I can celebrate others' successes & accomplishments

Expression of anger (7 responses)

I know anger is healthy and natural. I'm not afraid of my anger—try to not be abusive (esp. passive/aggressive) In expression of it—

I express anger, I don't become anger. I rarely abuse people. I have eliminated sarcasm.

My expression of anger is more appropriate. I voice it and do not break things.

Controlling or limiting violent, abusive behaviors (6 responses)

I rarely abuse people. I have eliminated sarcasm

I no longer act out/act on my violent tenancies.

One of the things I learned in Breakthrough is that my tendency to ignore the people who love me is actually a form of abuse. My experience with Breakthrough has resulted in my paying more attention to the people who are close to me—particularly my wife.

Actions in the workplace (5 responses)

I am much more willing to participate in leadership roles and problem solving in the workplace. I previously would sit in the background and not raise a peep or state my opinion. I now am a leader in my workplace.

I am able to listen to my clients, and other men, with greater attention, less distraction and complete confidence that whatever I may be able to contribute to the project or conversation will emerge in the right way at the right time.

I have taken on a leadership position at work.

Actions toward (behavior with) women (5 responses)

I realize that as a man I can come across to a woman as someone who can't be trusted + can be hurtful. I now use my boundaries by being attentive to this distress in women giving lots of physical and emotional space as necessary.

Ability to overlook body parts as major criterion for desirability in women; looking into people's eyes as the ultimate connection

Actions which contribute to the fulfillment of my dreams (4 responses)

I now have unlimited hope about my dreams and goals and enjoy every step towards them as well as the accomplishment itself.

I have pursued music which I have held back for years.

Able to work toward my own dreams with confidence, drawing on support and less afraid of rejection.

Approach to problem-solving (4 responses)

Problem solving—I am much more relaxed & excited/engaged and am more willing/able to learn from my mistakes.

Once I have examined an incident where I felt I had acted out inappropriately—I move towards making amends-claiming, owning, taking responsibility for my actions and words to the best of my ability—I don't blame.

Shifts in Attitude and Awareness

Researchers in the field of domestic violence prevention have increasingly recognized the importance of fostering shifts in more than just behaviors, but in addressing the underlying attitudes and awareness that generate the abusive behavior. Similarly, Breakthrough has focused on dismantling the socialized male role that is at the core of men's abusive behavior and dominance.

The list below (see Table 5.4.5) ranks the respondents' ranking of how Breakthrough fostered shifts in their attitudes and awareness. Clustered toward the top (between 8.06 and 7.48) are issues that again are central to the Breakthrough curriculum:

- Awareness of old hurts, what stimulates them, and how I respond
- My sense of self-worth
- Awareness of my own feeling states
- Attitude towards the male role in relationships with other men
- My understanding of the nature of healthy adult relationships
- Attitude towards the possibility of change in myself
- Awareness of when I am operating as a “child” vs “adult self”

At the bottom of the list, clustered between 5.61 and 4.28, are topics that are less central to the Breakthrough curriculum, including:

- Attitude towards the male role in the workplace
- Attitude towards diverse cultures and groups
- Attitude towards community work
- Attitude towards the role of violence in general
- Attitude towards the role of violence in my life

It is worth noting, however, that some movement is reported in all of these aspects of attitude and awareness. While items that are directly related to the theme of violence do not rank high in the respondents' lists, they nevertheless reflect some movement and therefore possibly reflect some tangential impact from the Breakthrough curriculum and learning procedures.

Table 5.4.5: Shifts in Attitude and Awareness. (1 = not changed; 10 = changed completely)

<i>Question 4.1. Shift in Attitude and Awareness.</i>		
Attitude and Awareness	Total	Avg.
Awareness of old hurts, what stimulates them, and how I respond	1321.5	8.06
My sense of self-worth	1300	7.93
Awareness of my own feeling states	1266.5	7.72
Attitude towards the male role in relationships with other men	1261	7.69
My understanding of the nature of healthy adult relationships	1253	7.64
Attitude towards the possibility of change in myself	1246.5	7.60
Awareness of when I am operating as a "child" vs. "adult self"	1226	7.48
Awareness of the impact of my positive behaviors on self	1216	7.41
My understanding of the power of my own history	1211.5	7.39
Awareness of my ability to choose to act and be in the world	1197	7.30
Attitude towards the male role in general	1183	7.21
My understanding of the nature of love	1171	7.14
Attitude towards future possibilities	1169.5	7.13
Awareness of the impact of my positive behavior on others	1165	7.10
Awareness of the impact of my abusive behaviors on self	1132	6.90
Sense of personal responsibility for my own behavior	1125.5	6.86
My understanding of the nature of racism, sexism, homophobia, etc, and the damage they cause	1121	6.84
My understanding of effective communication skills	1116	6.80
Attitude towards the role of anger in my life	1116	6.80
Attitude towards the male role in relationships with women in general	1106	6.74
Attitude towards the male role as spouse/partner	1050	6.40
My understanding of the nature of co-dependence	1048	6.39
Attitude towards the role of sex in my life	1027	6.26
Awareness of the impact of my abusive behaviors on others	994.5	6.06
Attitude towards the male role as father	991	6.04
Attitude towards the male role in the workplace	920	5.61
Attitude towards diverse cultures and groups	905	5.52
Attitude towards community work	853.5	5.20
Attitude towards the role of violence in general	840	5.12
Attitude towards the role of violence in my life	702	4.28

When respondents were given the opportunity to identify specific examples of the most significant changes in their attitudes and awareness, the following six themes emerged, consistent with the overall ranking:

- Self-worth
- Awareness of old patterns and triggers
- The male role
- Attitudes toward sex
- Anger
- Communications, listening

The following are some specific examples that the men cited as representative of the attitudinal shift that they experienced through Breakthrough.

Self-worth

Self-esteem—self-worth—I am a loving, caring, feeling man. I can be a much better father now.

My sense of self-worth. I know that I am intact and that I now see the wonderful things people see in me.

My sense of self-worth is not based on perceptions of success or failure; but instead is a reflection of important inner strengths: wholeness, willingness, empathy (the ability to see more than one point of view to any given problem). Example: I have stopped drinking and smoking, BT was instrumental in this.

Awareness of old patterns and triggers

I am now very aware of my old triggers and patterns. Previously, I was oblivious to the fact that I would be hearing my mother, and acting as a little boy, not the adult me.

I better understand how my unhealed childhood traumas iverlay my present day reality, and consequently can better separate my true self and true choices from my tendency to give in to the false authority of my adaptive child persona and choose to listen to my deeper self instead.

The male role

I realize now that the male role offered by mainstream culture is completely not who I am. I now know that I am fully capable of loving other men and myself.

My view of relationships between men has very much evolved since BT. I can see so much clearer now how men got stuck in dehumanizing roles that keep men afraid, violent, aggressive—with no real alternative to this role.

Attitudes towards sex

I realize that it's no longer my goal in life to have sex. Not to determine if I would be in a relationship with you by whether or not I would be sexual with you.

I now accept that sex is less important than a solid, loving relationship.

In front of at least 10 men I said "Even if it shortens my life, I have decided not to flirt and not to have affairs and to continue to be faithful to my wife.

Issues of anger

Understanding my attitude towards the role of anger in my life—anger is the result of not communicating frustrations.

I used to become my anger—it was uncontrolled. Now I honor it, know it is not me, and act appropriately. Boy, is my family glad and so am I.

Communication, Listening

Listening without fixing or advising.

Communication skills: the ability to solve personal and work issues in a kind way.

Listening is a lot more active than just being passive and taking turns speaking.

SUMMARY

Clearly, the impact of Breakthrough on the respondents is ENORMOUS. The word “transformative” is overused in today’s popular healing literature. However, in this context, it seems very appropriate. As is evidenced by the participants’ own rich descriptions of their own transformation, Breakthrough has helped foster significant personal growth and healing in an overwhelming majority of cases.

The participants’ own description of the changes in their behavior shows that Breakthrough has helped them make meaningful changes in all aspects of their lives, from their intimate relations to the relations at work to their lives in the community. Breakthrough has helped men move from a place of isolation, fear, and powerlessness, to a place of connectedness, confidence and powerful sense of their agency in the world. Men have become more trusting, better listeners, and more capable of deep, rich human emotional expression.

Clearly, Breakthrough has had an impact on both men’s behaviors and their attitudes and awareness about their role in their families, communities and society. Breakthrough has helped men dismantle the oppressive socialized male role, and rebuild a different kind of male, one who is compassionate, able to feel, and expressive; who has a deep sense of his own goodness and gentleness; and who is fully human. The impact is summed-up by this respondent, succinctly capturing the essence of the transformation:

Breakthrough saved my life. I live, instead of coping

Summary

* 91% of the respondents stated that Breakthrough has had a “considerable” or “enormous” impact on their lives. 51% of the men chose the word “enormous” to capture the transformation.

* The men characterized the transformation as: increased self-knowledge and self-confidence; moving from isolation to connectedness; ability to identify and express emotions; and ability to deal with anger and overcome fear.

* Men identified specific behavioral transformations, both with regard to their intimate family members (spouse, children), and with men in general.

* There was also a significant shift around attitudes, especially with regard to: the male role, self-worth and attitudes toward sex.

Chapter 5.5 Impact on Anger and Violence

Let's begin by listening to the voices of the men...

For me, having people like Lee and Philip, Philip was my guide. He cared enough to stay with me, and allowed the men in my group to witness, and I think that was huge for me, to have a witness not only to my pain, but to my healing. And I've, you know, I've been to numerous anger management, domestic violence courses, and have successfully completed 'em all, and have re-offended on every occasion. I didn't get that there. I got sitting around in a room of broken men, with no direction, with no healing, with a lot of statistics, with a lot of should and shouldn'ts, and how to try and curb your temper, rather than dealing with what's underneath, where that anger is. You know, I haven't struck anyone in over five years. And that's huge for a guy like me, it really is. Male or female. I haven't felt the need to get aggressive. And, you know, the anger isn't there. Even when I get really angry, I'm not raging. I can show my anger, I can state my anger, and I can let it go. You know, it's a feeling, it is not controlling me. That was basically from being in a group of men like we are. That helped me heal. (A/V)

I had some point in my life, as a little kid, I had realized or decided that I was alone in my life. As a little kid, like three years old, like "I'm on my own here." And that was such a stressful decision, or, realization, that I coped with it. But what Breakthrough, I mean the key for me, was to be around men I trusted, to be physically touched by people I trusted, and go through my stuff, and see that it could actually get out of my system. That being alone, that my basic truth was that I was alone, that was way too stressful, and I just couldn't heal from that. As soon as I wasn't alone, it was easy - so easy I couldn't believe how easy it was - to get my stuff out. That was the big how-I-could heal. I do that all the time now. It also gave me space to realize that I could actually heal, and I could actually feel better . . . From a violence perspective, it's like, I either have to kill this person to stop this from happening, or I just have to take it. Now, I don't have to choose either one of those things any more. (AV)

Part of my being able to relax was the realization that I was stressed all in my body, from that alone thing, was in my body, was something I ran all the time, very tight, ready to, you know, being, you know, I'm on the defensive. I'm the only one on my team. I have to be ready all the time. And to be physically touched by these guys, physically my body relaxed in a way that only pot had done before. I was sober, going "Oh my god, I can do this." And I've never gone back. (AV)

I took anger management classes for quite a while voluntarily before Breakthrough. That was the weakest link in my parenting experience, and I see it now in my kid at 26...That was the example that was set. I wish I did Breakthrough right after high school, so I could understand what was pushing my buttons...All the anger management classes in the world wouldn't have helped me understand why I felt anger to start with, to be able to resolve it

internally, to where I didn't feel the anger...Anger management only helped me deal with the symptoms, but not get to the cause. (FS)

In order to gain insight into the possible contribution of BMC to the field of domestic violence prevention, the study focused significant energy on understanding the impact of Breakthrough on the men's relationship to anger and violence. A number of questions on the survey directly addressed this issue. In addition, each of the six focus groups was asked to comment on the relationship of the Breakthrough curriculum to issues of anger and violence, while one focus group was made up of seven men for whom anger and violence were significant motivating factors for them joining Breakthrough.

Though "anger and violence" are often lumped together, we decided to separate the two concepts in the research. We asked specific questions focusing on violence, and other questions that addressed issues of anger. We made this distinction partly due to the recent curricular development within Breakthrough itself. Breakthrough has increasingly focused on issues of anger, distinguishing "righteous anger" from "rage," and enabling men to feel and express anger in appropriate ways. As a result, the concept of "appropriate expression of anger" was used in the survey to help men separate anger as a feeling from its violent and inappropriate expression as rage and violence.

BREAKTHROUGH'S IMPACT ON VIOLENCE

Pre- and Post-Breakthrough Violent Behaviors

The survey incorporated aspects of the "Revised Conflict Tactics Scale" (CTS2), to capture men's patterns of addressing conflict in their intimate relations.² CTS2 is an instrument commonly used to measure psychological and physical attacks on a partner in a marital, cohabitating, or dating relationship. When we reviewed the items on CTS2, we felt it didn't quite capture the entire range of responses to conflict. The instrument focused on outward expressions of anger, either psychological or physical aggression, but did not include more passive-aggressive, or internalized strategies for addressing conflict. To address this end of the response spectrum, we added three items to the CTS2 list:

- 1) Expressed anger through withdrawal, making myself unavailable, sulking, etc.;
- 2) Used passive/aggressive behaviors to get back covertly at them; and,
- 3) Seemed depressed.

Twice in the survey, men were asked to reflect on their actions and behaviors in conflicts, either with their partner/spouse, children, or colleagues (survey questions 2.4 and 5.1). In question 2.4, men were asked to focus on their behavior "in the months prior to starting Breakthrough." Later

² Straus, M., Hamby, S, Boney-McCoy, S, and Sugarman, D. "The Revised Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS2): Development and Preliminary Psychometric Data." *Journal of Family Issues*, May 1996, 283–316.

in the survey, in question 5.1, they were asked to focus on their behavior, “since completing the Breakthrough program.” Their responses are presented in Table 5.5.1.

Table 5.5.1.

<i>Questions 2.4 and 5.1. Pre- and post-Breakthrough actions of violence toward partner, children, or colleagues. (Never = 1; Rarely = 2; Sometimes = 3; Often = 4)</i>			
	Pre	Post	Difference
H. Withdrawal, unavailable, sulking	3.10	1.88	1.23
I. Passive-aggressive	2.83	1.77	1.05
J. Depressed	2.99	2.07	0.92
B. Shouted or Yelled	2.24	1.51	0.73
A. Insulted or swore	2.08	1.38	0.70
C. Stomped out	1.91	1.29	0.62
F. Pushed, grabbed or shoved	1.26	1.01	0.25
D. Threatened to hit or throw	1.20	0.97	0.23
E. Hit or threw something	1.13	0.95	0.18
L. Used force to have sex	1.01	0.90	0.10
G. Inflicted significant injuries	1.04	0.95	0.09

Two things jump out from these results. First, as anticipated, the Breakthrough cohort of well-educated, middle and upper-middle class men internalize their anger and suppress their violent tendencies. The three highest-rated responses were the three responses that we added to the CTS2 instrument: withdrawal/sulking, passive-aggressive behaviors, and being depressed. They all hovered around “3” (2.83 to 3.10), equivalent to “often” on the 4-point scale. The three verbal aggressive responses (insulted, shouted or yelled, stomped out) converged on a score of 2.0 (1.91 to 2.24) on the pre-Breakthrough ratings, which equates to “sometimes” on the 4-point scale. Finally, the physical aggression responses were closer to 1 (a range of 1.04 to 1.26), or “rarely.” Clearly, the BT respondents are most likely to internalize their anger and violence, and least likely to resort to physical aggression.

The pre-post comparisons are also noteworthy. The three internalized responses showed the largest pre-post change, ranging from a decrease of 1.23 to a decrease of .92 on a 4 point scale. This is significant, we shall argue, not only from these data but also from the intersection with qualitative survey findings and from focus group responses.. The verbal aggression responses also showed significant decreases from pre- to post-Breakthrough, in the range of .70 to .62. However, the physical responses show very little shift, as the pre-Breakthrough responses were already significantly low.

Insights from Focus Groups

The tendency toward isolation, suppression, and depression was confirmed in the focus groups. All focus groups resonated well to the idea that suppression, sulking, passive-aggressive behaviors and depression were the most common responses. One respondent in the fathers of sons focus group, on viewing the quantitative findings, said:

I did all those. Isolation was big. My son and I hadn't really communicated well. He was living in Arizona, starting a family, and we weren't communicating. And I wasn't taking any action on it. And I discovered I had a lot of fear telling him what I wanted. (FS)

Another participant in the focus group expressed the cumulative impact of a life of feeling judged and criticized:

I've realized that I've always had this judge inside of me, it never slept. It was always criticizing me, telling me what I did wrong, what I did wrong, what I didn't do right. That I wasn't enough. And after 45 years of that, I started to fall apart. What working on boundaries did, was stopping the criticisms and self-judgments, self-loathing. It occurs to me that people either turn inward with their anger, or turn outward. So, I was never outwardly violent, I went inward. People who I see who are outwardly violent, it is the same thing, but only turned outward. (FS)

Pre-Breakthrough: Violence, Rage, or Reckless Behavior

The survey asked the men to reflect on the strategies they used to handle their violent, rage and reckless behavior, pre-Breakthrough. The most frequent examples cited reinforce the dominant response pattern for this cohort of men: isolation, withdrawal, and denial. The second most common response relates to addictive behaviors, most typically alcohol, drugs, sex, gambling, and work. As an indication of the resourcefulness (both financial and social) of this group of men, the third most common response was “sought professional help.”

Table 5.5.2

<i>Question 2.5. Pre-Breakthrough strategies to handle violence, rage, and reckless behavior.</i>	
	Count
Isolate/withdraw/deny	48
Addictive behaviors (alcohol, drugs, sex, work)	39
Sought professional help (therapy, 12 step)	29
Exercise self-control	19
Self-blame	10
Rationalize	9
Exercise, hobbies	5
Act out (verbal or physical violence)	4
Sought help from friends	3

Some succinct comments from the survey help to clarify the meaning of each of these strategies

Isolate/withdraw/deny

The most common response was isolation and withdrawal. Clearly, men did not feel they had the skills to address the issue, or deal with their feelings. As a result, the most common response was to deny the issue, and withdraw. Examples include:

- I was more into withdrawal and sulking
- I would leave the house for long periods

Addictive behaviors (alcohol, drugs, sex)

The second most common response was to avoid the issue, and seek refuge in the temporal pleasure of alcohol, drugs and/or sex addiction. You can imagine the variety of ways that the men expressed this strategy, such as:

I would feed my addictions
I would just drink until numb

Sought professional help (therapy, 12 step)

A number of men recognized the significance of the problem, and sought professional help to address their urges toward violence and rage. Some cited approaches such as:

12 step meetings/psychotherapy
I saw a psychiatrist and took xanax, lamictal, respondol and celexa to cope

Exercise self-control

Typical of the male role, many men described their attempts to exercise self-control over their violent behavior. Examples included:

Take a time out and breathe
Pledge to myself not to repeat such behavior again and hope to myself that I would find the strength to avoid repeat behavior

Self-blame and Rationalization

Without any access to healthy alternatives, men also identified self-blame and feeling guilty as their common strategy to dealing with (or not dealing with) their violent rage. A similar strategy, and often accompanying, would be to rationalize the behavior. Examples include:

Feel ashamed about them
Mentally beat myself up and feel guilty
I would try to justify my behavior
Rationalize and excuse the behavior

Work (working more, harder, obsessively), Exercise, Hobbies

Another socially accepted strategy is for men to lose themselves in either their work, exercise or hobbies. This way men still feel productive, and worthy, though the issues remain unaddressed. Comments about this approach include:

Worked harder
Became a workaholic
Take a walk
I would use my hobbies to my benefit, which slowed my reckless behavior

Role of Breakthrough in Transforming Violent Behavior

The men were asked to reflect on which concepts and skills from the Breakthrough curriculum

were most helpful to bringing about changes in their violent and reckless behavior (survey questions 5.2 and 5.3). A count of the times discrete concepts, insights, tools and skills are mentioned is described below in Tables 5.5.3 and 5.5.4.. Though the data is presented separately, there was significant overlap in the responses.

Table 5.5.3

<i>Question 5.2. What concepts and insights from Breakthrough have been most important in enhancing your understanding of our own violent or reckless behavior?</i>	
Identifying and analyzing triggers from early hurts, the role of childhood trauma, dealing with adaptive child behaviors, adult reality, etc	90
Self-esteem, self-affirmation, inherent nature	54
Feeling states, separating feelings from reality, expressing feelings appropriately	29
Understanding the conditioning of the male role	7
Understanding role of sex, nature of sex addiction	5

Table 5.5.4

<i>Question 5.3. In the time since your completing Breakthrough, what tools or skills, if any, have you used to control outbursts of violent or reckless behavior?</i>	
Boundaries	39
Breathing	20
Slowing down, taking a time out	20
Check-ins, sessions	19
Active listening, listening skills	17
Communication skills, conflict resolution	9

While most responses to these questions were one or two-word phrases referencing an aspect of the Breakthrough curriculum, some of the typical more lengthy responses include the following:

The concept of inherent nature has enhanced my understanding of reckless behavior.

Being aware of my emotions has given me an understanding of who I want to be.

Learning where my boundaries are and how to keep them intact when faced with adversity.

To acknowledge my feelings and deal with them before I become enraged.

Check in with a Breakthrough buddy to vent anger, fear, etc instead of acting out inappropriately.

I find a safe, non-judgmental space (allies)—I discharge distress, and I do this by tracing the distress to old hurts.

Esteeming myself is the best tool when I notice an inclination towards addictive behavior.

Realized that my own anger was the result of my childhood trauma. That the anger was covering up all the hurt I had suffered.

Clearly the dominant concepts that emerges from the data is the power of Breakthrough to: 1) help men to explore the source of their pain in early hurts and childhood trauma; 2) reinforce their own internal value and self-esteem; and 3) understand their feeling states, and be able to express feelings, knowing that they are separate from their reality.

The respondents also identified skills from the Breakthrough curriculum that are most helpful in enabling them to avoid violence, rage and reckless behavior. The most important tool is their knowledge of and use of their “boundaries,” to be able to separate their own feelings from those around them. Breathing and slowing down were also frequently cited. Finally, there is a clear recognition that learning to listen (active listening) is also a critically important skill.

Insights from Focus Groups

When these insights about key concepts and skills were presented to the men in the focus groups, the men expressed a strong sense of concurrence, that these were in fact the critical elements for their own growth and healing around issues of violence. The importance of understanding the source of your pain and anger in the early hurts and childhood trauma was well-expressed by one participant in the Father and son focus group:

I was into addictive behavior with or without the drugs. I would go through the “wife-beating classes” that nobody got anything out of, until you understand **why** you are feeling those emotions. Until I went back and did the childhood trauma work. There isn't much you can say or do, you can arrest me as many times as you want, there is nothing that is going to get through. I don't give a shit how many times you send me to a court-appointed D.V. class, I did them for years. It was just confusing. “Take a walk.” Fuck, I'm still a mad guy taking a walk. In an hour later, I might be less pissed-off, but when I come back, I'm that same guy. Drinking, type-one diabetic . . . If I were to get married again, everything would be different because I'd understand where those emotions came from, so I could identify that it is something that happened when I was a kid, and not take it out on my own kid, or my wife . . . You can't just beat me over the head. I have to understand why I'm feeling that way . . . (FS)

The importance of healing from these early hurts was well-expressed by one of the participants in the violence and anger focus group:

Healing all that, the hurts that had been done to me, and the injustices. You know, my anger doesn't reach the levels that it was at one time. I think there's just, you know, only so much coal to stoke that fire with and, you know, the fire's not starting off at 98%. And dealing with anger management classes, domestic violence classes, “count to 10” is their biggest thing. You know, it's not really how to heal it or solve the issue. It's about how to “count to 10” and then “ask for a timeout.” You know, that's really not helping me here. (AV)

The importance of rebuilding men's self-esteem, and helping them to discover the goodness of their inherent nature was well-expressed by one participant in the teacher's focus group:

I think that domestic, guys in domestic violence, what I see that they really, really need, and what Breakthrough provides is Love. Where else are you going to get LOVE if you're one of those violent assholes out there fucking up women. That's the kind of place, you know, you're gonna get. Is you're gonna get a lot of rules, a lot of regs., a lot of sit-down . . . No, well, I've got another idea. How about loving them? (T)

The importance of understanding and using boundaries was well-expressed in this story by one of the participants in the fathers of sons focus group:

I'm just about divorced, it's been about three years; my parents got divorced when I was seven, and my divorce started when my son was seven. So, there was a lot about watching him to react to the divorce that triggered a lot of stuff. And one of the things about boundaries that I wouldn't have gotten without Breakthrough, is to interrupt the projection. That his experience of his parents divorce, is not the same as my experience of my parents' divorce. So, when I get this feeling about my poor children, and my poor son, I can say that those are my feelings, and don't assume that he is going through the same thing. I am able to have my feelings, and be a witness to what he is feeling, without pre-assumptions. (FS)

A participant in the anger and violence focus group expressed the power and importance of boundaries this way:

Learning to not react to my spouses feelings. Learning that I am not my feelings and helps me realize that she's not her feelings. And that her feelings may not be a reflection of me. There is a slight possibility that her feelings are not about me, or a reflection of me . . . It is so great that she can be really upset about something, and I'm still present, and listening; and can say, she's having a tough time, I'm really sorry about that, I'm OK. (AV)

The power of learning listening skills was expressed by a participant in the teacher's focus group:

I think the most helpful thing for men with real anger issues is learning how to listen. I think most men who come in with anger issues don't know how to listen. So I think the Breakthrough program is really helpful, for them to sit and listen to other people, and decide if they're OK, you know, with the boundaries, and all that kind of stuff, to decide that it's ok for somebody else to feel differently about it and they don't have to change then to think their own way, you know. So, I think the listening skills is A number one as far as the anger piece goes. And just practicing it over and over. And discipline. Deciding instead of to emote or dump on someone, just to keep, you need to keep them listening and breathing. (T)

IMPACT ON ANGER

Pre- and Post-Breakthrough Comparison of Men's Relationship to Anger

At two points in the survey (survey questions 2.6 and 5.4), the men were asked to reflect on their relationship to the expression of anger, pre- and post-Breakthrough. The concept of "appropriate

expression of anger” was explained in the survey as: “feeling one’s anger instead of ‘becoming’ one’s anger; and that one can express anger while still engaged in loving behavior.”

The contrasts are quite striking, and are represented in Table 5.5.5.

Table 5.5.5

<i>Questions 2.6 and 5.4. Please characterize our general pattern of behavior by circling one of the following choices. (Pre-Post Anger Comparison)</i>				
	Pre #	Pre %	Post #	Post %
Suppress	58	35%	7	4%
Always Inappropriately	6	4%	0	0%
Mostly inappropriately	45	27%	0	0%
Sometimes each	28	17%	16	10%
Mostly appropriately	24	15%	117	71%
Always Appropriately	2	1%	15	9%
Mostly or Always Appropriately		16%		80%

These responses are consistent with the overall findings that this cohort of men has a strong tendency toward the internalization of their anger. 35% of the respondents characterized their general pattern of behavior pre-Breakthrough as based in the “suppression of anger.” Unlike the expression of physical violence where few men reported incidents of physically violent behavior, a significant subset of men reported inappropriate expressions of anger. 31% of the respondents characterized their pre-Breakthrough behavior as either “always inappropriate” or “mostly inappropriate” expressions of anger.

The comparison between the pre-Breakthrough and post-Breakthrough responses is striking. “Suppression” of anger is reduced from 35% to 4%. Most salient is that the inappropriate expression of anger has completely disappeared. Previously 31% of the men reported either “always inappropriate” or “mostly inappropriate” expressions of anger. Reflecting on their lives post-Breakthrough, this dropped to 0%. Finally, the percentage of men who report either “mostly appropriate” or “always appropriate” expressions of anger increased from 16% to 80%. **Four out of five men** reported that, post-Breakthrough, their expressions of anger are either “mostly appropriate” or “always appropriate.”

Role of Breakthrough in Transforming Relationship to the Expression of Anger

The men were asked to reflect on which concepts and skills from the Breakthrough curriculum were most helpful to bringing about changes in their relationship to the expression of anger (survey questions 5.5 and 5.6). Their responses are consistent with earlier responses about the impact on issues of violence. The following five key concepts emerged from the responses:

- Understanding the source of anger in childhood trauma, shame, and carried feelings;
- Self-esteem and self-worth
- Understanding feeling states
- Boundaries
- Victim role of male conditioning

Respondents identified the following tools as most effective in helping them to address issues of anger:

- Boundaries
- Venting techniques
- Expressing feelings, including anger
- Using "I" statements

Again, as with violent and reckless behavior, the themes of understanding the source of anger in childhood trauma, self-esteem, and the capacity to understand and express feeling states emerged as the most important concepts from Breakthrough relevant to issues of anger. In terms of tools, the participants cited boundaries and venting techniques as the most relevant. In addition, participants referred to expressing feelings and using "I" statements as important tools with regard to anger.

Key Concepts

Examples from the survey are helpful in describing how the Breakthrough curriculum helps men to address the anger that they hold deeply, sometimes, unconsciously. These include:

Awareness of triggers of early hurts has given me clarity to not react so easily. (Triggers for early hurts)

The childhood fear of anger expression has been vanquished. No more shame. (Childhood trauma and shame)

Knowing that I am acting out of distress from an old hurt and not something present time. (Carried feelings)

Understanding my adaptive child/coping behaviors—being gentle with myself and moving on. (Re-parenting adaptive child)

I was always afraid of my anger or expressing it. The adaptive child learned that way of dealing with it. Now that I am more aware of my inherent nature and that anger is a feeling, I have less fear in expressing it appropriately. (Inherent nature)

*Knowing that if I am "barking" I am not in the adult.
I am able to differentiate the adult from the adapted child. (Adaptive child)*

I don't internalize my anger and take it out on

Anger before Breakthrough, when I would get angry about something, the charge would be about everything in my frickin' life focused in on this, and it'd bring all sorts of rage in and anger and had nothing to do with the topic that I was angry about at the time. Learning from Breakthrough it was like to learn how to discharge the charge, and then move on, and then get rid of it the appropriate way for what it is you're angry about and then you move on. As opposed to you bring all this other shit on top of it . . . until you have no idea what you're talking about . . . but now it can be a sort of focus thing . . . you have a charge, you bring that up, you share it and just by doing that it discharges it and you can say, "OK, I'm done now." And it's on topic, and not about the myriad of other shit that you spew. (AV)

others. I am not violent because I feel angry. Violence isn't anger. Rage is anger not listened to. (*Difference between anger and rage*)

I am not my anger, anger usually covers up fear—for me. Anger is a normal emotion, rage is not. Violence is not a feeling. (*Understanding feelings*)

My main issue was that clearly related to my early hurts. Once I got out of that early hurt stage, I was OK. (AV)

Becoming more able to identify and express feelings as they arise in the body before they became overwhelming. (*I can have feelings*)

Moving beyond the feeling/belief of being a "victim"-victims carry anger as a constant background feeling. That I am not my anger, but that my anger is here to serve an important function for my protection and creativity Anger serves as a messenger to identify past trauma that needs to be healed so that the pattern can be deconstructed. (*Understanding anger*)

My anger has its roots in defending myself against the perceived (but false) threat to my worth and value and right to exist. I am entitled to my feelings. I have learned to enjoy the release of venting old anger, and find less intensity in present anger. (*Anger as a feeling*)

Self-esteem—knowing that I am okay and that I can let people know that I disagree. It's not that I don't care what other people think but I'm not "ruled" by other people's opinion of me. (*Self-esteem*)

Key Skills

Similar to the key concepts, the responses also shed some light on how the skills that men learn in Breakthrough enable them to address their anger “appropriately,” and engage more authentically with their feelings.

That I can and deserve to say "No" and I am not obligated to relieve my wife or children's distress. (*Boundaries*)

Boundary work has been important for checking in on how I'm feeling and getting a clearer sense of what my anger is about. Noting anger that is not present time. (*Boundaries*)

Not to be overwhelmed by my feelings and to listen, with boundaries intact before responding. (*Listening skills*)

Being able to say that I am feeling upset—without necessarily blaming someone for "making me angry." (*Using "I" statements*)

Check-ins and sessioning is really important. I do a Thursday night group, as an educator. But if I don't do a session, it is not good. I take more of the male role on, and I can't be my authentic loving self, unless I'm still doing the work, revisiting the manuals. I can really see how different it is when I am checking in. It is so easy to go back to the isolation. Need to check-in daily to keep it down. (AV)

I don't need to use anger when I want distance or space. I can transform an anger urge into direct communication. Its OK to feel anger. I can choose how to express it with respect of others. *(Able to express anger)*

I do not bottle up daily irritations and release them in my old, annual explosion of anger. Not once in the last 3 years. I don't carry resentment any longer: now I care for myself. *(Able to express feelings)*

I hold it in, but I now can release it by yelling at the wall or a pillow. The exercise used in two people holding you back as you scream and yell. *(Venting techniques)*

Check-ins with BT partners; check-ins with inner child; honoring and identifying the feeling behind the anger—knowing its source in old trauma. *(Check-in partners)*

Insights from Focus Groups

The focus groups confirmed the insights about men's ability to understand and effectively express anger in a loving and compassionate way. One participant in the anger and violence focus group described his growing awareness of feelings and feeling states, as well as the successful use of his boundaries with his spouse:

Learning to not react to my spouse's feelings. Learning that I am not my feelings and helps me realize that she is not her feelings. And that her feelings may not be a reflection of me. There is a slight possibility that her feelings might not be about me, or a reflection of me... It is so great that she can be really upset about something, and I'm still breathing, and listening; and can say, she's having a tough time, I'm really sorry about that, I'm OK. (AV)

The power of the healing process and the importance of the group in creating a safe place where healing can occur was expressed by a participant in the anger and violence focus group this way:

There is something magical about BT that, you know, if you're just a State person, trying to reduce domestic violence, you wouldn't go for suppressing anger, but you would focus somehow on stopping the anger. But of course we know that when you suppress it, it just blows out the other way, later. There is something magical about Breakthrough, by giving us a safe place to feel the anger, to name the anger, to share the anger, that enables it to gently be vaporized over time, and learning how to deal with it in appropriate ways, I mean, it makes perfect sense, I think. (AV)

The combination of understanding early hurts, and building self-esteem was emphasized by one participant in the educator/ally focus group who said:

The most important thing is helping guys to see where the anger comes from. I think it doesn't matter how deep and extreme the anger and the violence is. If you can get a guy to the point where he sees where it comes from, and you give him the safe context to process that and to see that he can be loved! . . . I fundamentally believe that that's true, that

they can see that history and how to process, to kind of process the old stuff out, and bring it, replace it with love, self-esteem, boundaries, tools . . . (EA)

One of the participants in the teachers focus group emphasized the fundamental importance of boundaries and self-esteem, stating:

Boundaries are important because you can't have the rest without boundaries, you know. So boundaries are a number one. You can't have any intimacy without boundaries, ok? And then you've got self-esteem, which means, you know, you can't have a relationship with anybody else until you have a relationship with yourself. That goes along with reclaiming goodness, you know . . . All the other stuff just follows behind it. (T)

Summary

* Pre-Breakthrough, respondents predominantly resorted to withdrawal, being unavailable, sulking, passive-aggressive behavior and depression as their typical responses to inter-personal conflict. In contrast, participants were significantly less likely to resort to physical violence.

* Pre- and Post-Breakthrough comparisons using an amended version of the Revised Conflict Tactics Scale shows a significant decrease in the above “passive behaviors,” and also significant decreases in occasions of verbal abuse.

* Pre-Breakthrough, 16% of respondents reported their expressions of anger to be either “mostly or always appropriate.” Post-Breakthrough, 80% of respondents reported that their expressions of anger to be either “mostly or always appropriate.”

* Breakthrough's impact on issues of anger and violence can be summed up through these three steps in the healing and growth process for men:

- 1) Reinforces men's own internal value (“inherent nature”) and self-esteem;
- 2) Helps men to explore the source of their pain in early hurts and childhood trauma; and,
- 3) Helps men to understand their feeling states, and be able to express feelings, knowing that they are separate from their current reality and sense of self.

Chapter 5.6

Participation in Breakthrough Community Activities

From the beginning of the project, we were aware that while there was considerable consistency in the experience of BT graduates with the program itself, there was an equally considerable variation in their activities and participation after completing the program. We knew this from our own experience, from initial interviews with the Director of Operations and the Founder, and from comments of those who participated in piloting the survey. The survey data and the focus group commentaries supported this view and added many detailed insights, a sample of which are reviewed below.

The first obvious point to re-affirm concerns those BT graduates who did not complete the survey. Of the approximately 600 total graduates, some 150 were completely beyond reach, indicating that all contact with the community had ended. Of the remainder, a little over one third responded. While we would caution that this figure is somewhat speculative, we would estimate that, first, three out of four BT graduates participate in some way in community activities during the two years immediately after completing the program; secondly, that beyond the two year mark, participation drops to one graduate in three. Of course, given the impact data reviewed above (see especially section 5.5), we can also predict that ninety per cent of graduates took with them valuable insights, tools and lessons. Our evidence from the focus group of men with little or no participation in the community suggests that some make a conscious decision to regard the BT experience as finite and are happy to walk away with the benefits they have accumulated. Others intend to sustain the contact with the community, but find significant obstacles and their involvement becomes fragmented and eventually evaporates. We return to this pattern later in this section.

However, to be clear, these findings are speculative and for the bulk of this section we confine our attention to those BT men who completed the survey, recognizing that they are, almost by definition, a population with some significant contact with the community. We begin with an account of the range of community activities and patterns of participation across these opportunities. We then examine specifically the self-led groups (or BT3) and the characteristics of those which persist and those which eventually fail. Finally, we look at the relationships among the various community activities and different aspects of personal growth.

Before moving to the details, here are some typical comments from survey respondents and focus group participants:

That's the core component, the core concept of what makes the Breakthrough community work is this concept of "every man to the center." (EA)

The community part is huge. I see my partner able to reach out to this whole network of folks that can meet him at that depth, instead of, you know, needing to rely on just one or two people. He's got a circle he can be vulnerable and be supported. (SP)

The summer retreats allowed me to have an intense, powerful experience that jump-started my awareness.

Feeling the affection other men have for me and how they value me just as I am.

...to remain "banded" together with the guys manifested continued fruition and new growth.

PARTICIPATION IN BREAKTHROUGH COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

Having established a menu of the various ways BT graduates can continue to participate in the community, we asked survey respondents to indicate the importance and value of each of these in sustaining and extending the impact of BT1 and BT2 on their life (survey item 4.5). The results appear in Table 5.6.1.

Table 5.6.1. Participation in BMC

<i>Question 4.5 Please indicate the importance and value of each of these Breakthrough community activities in sustaining and extending the impact of BT1 and BT2.</i>			
Activity	Total	Mean	# of
Self-led group	1012.5	6.80	149
On-going check-in partner	863	6.44	134
Summer retreat	840	6.36	132
Attending other	734.5	5.36	137
Reading the newsletter	687	4.87	141
Checking Breakthrough	591	4.51	131
Working as an ally or an	570.5	5.23	109
Providing financial support	441	3.71	119
Volunteering at	329	3.32	99
Breakthrough committee or	278.5	2.90	96
Other	49	3.06	16

This table indicates a couple of important findings. Firstly, from the "Number of responses" column, we see that the great majority of this population had some experience with a self-led group (149/164), a check-in partner (134/164) and the summer retreat (132/164). Secondly, with average ratings of over 6 on a ten point scale (between "some" and "a lot"), these three activities were relatively highly regarded in terms of importance and value in sustaining the impact of BT. We note, however, that no items are close to the top possible range, between 8 ("a lot") and 10 ("huge"). While well over half of respondents also maintained contact through the newsletter, the e mail announcements, the special events and various kinds of volunteer work, these items were rated relatively less highly.

It is therefore reasonably clear from these data that the greatest impact comes from the three chief ways of remaining connected to other BT men: self-led groups, check-in partners and the summer retreat. These findings are supported from the focus group data, as participants spoke highly of the self-led groups, despite the difficulties in sustaining participation over a long period of time (see below for details). We also heard a number of comments that when the self-led

group was not an option, or when one disintegrated, the check-in partner was a meaningful fall-back option, as in:

I remember going through Breakthrough that was the peak of my, you know - I felt the best, during that year period. You know, 'cos I had all this attention, affection, appreciation, etcetera. Since I don't have that every week, I find that that's kind of dropped off and it's easier for me to fall back into my old patterns of behavior. So that's why the check-in's so important. (LI)

However, the one mismatch here might be the data on being a member of a teaching team (or an educator/ally). The lower rating here does not conform with the enthusiasm of participants in the teaching team focus group, who clearly viewed this activity as primary in maintaining their contact with the community and with the work. In addition, the high number of responses (109) is also a puzzle, as only 55 indicated earlier in the survey that they had this experience (see section 5.1 above). We conclude that 54 survey participants were speculating on the impact should they choose to be a teaching team member, and that they possibly underestimated that impact. Hence the contrast between this data set and the findings in Table 5.6.5 below.

PARTICIPATION IN SELF-LED GROUPS

Turning specifically to the self-led groups, we asked (survey item 4.6.a) for the extent of participation in such a group after graduation from BT. The results appear in Table 5.7.2.

Table 5.6.2: Participation in Self-Led Groups

<i>Question 4.6.a. After I graduated from BT, I attended a self-led group for ...</i>		
	#	%
Never participated	25	15%
Several weeks	16	10%
Several months	30	18%
A year	39	24%
Two years	21	13%
More than 2 years	33	20%

The key finding here, endorsed in the focus group data, was that only one BT graduate in 5 sustains self-led group participation beyond two years, even though 85% join a BT 3 group after graduation. The drop-out rate is gradual, with over half (57%) staying with it for at least a year, but only a third (33%) lasting two years and then only 20% beyond that. These findings clearly justify out attempts to probe the reasons for the struggles to sustain the self-led groups. First, though, we checked on average patterns of attendance (survey item 4.6.b), seen in Table 5.6.3. These data indicate that while members of a self-led group, most survey participants (77%) managed to attend regularly, with only 6% admitting to a regularity of less than twice a month.

Table 5.6.3: Patterns of Self-Led Group Participation

<i>Question 4.6.b. During that time, I attended group meetings, on average, ...</i>		
	#	%
Never participated	25	15%
Once a week	92	56%
Twice a month	35	21%
Monthly	5	3%
Occasionally	4	2%
Rarely	2	1%

The final item in this sequence (survey item 4.6.c) asked if respondents were still active in a self-led group and results in a broad summary, as seen in Table 5.6.4.

Table 5.6.4: Current Activity in Self-Led Groups

<i>Question 4.6.c. I am still an active member of a self-led group...</i>		
	#	%
Never participated: 29	29	18%
Still Active: 54	56	34%
Not active: 74	78	48%

It is a little perplexing that the "never participated" category is slightly larger, but nevertheless, the trend here is unmistakable: 82% of respondents joined a self-led group at some point after graduation but less than half of them remain active. Only a third of respondents remain in a functioning self-led group (many of them, we suspect, within the first two years, beyond which most groups fade away). Yet, self-led groups receive the highest rating in terms of continuing impact of the life of BT men (Table 5.6.1 above). It was therefore important for us to understand the factors which make these groups successful and enable them to persist, and those factors which cause disruption or stagnation and lead to groups disbanding.

Characteristics of Successful Self-Led Groups

Noting the tendency for self-led groups to disband after a relatively short period of time (two years seems to be a milestone which some reach but few go beyond), we wanted to explore the characteristics of successful groups and the challenges which need to be overcome. We begin with the positive features. The survey (item 4.7) asked respondents to identify the two or three most important characteristics of their self-led group which had supported their continuing development and growth.

Continued Connection with Men

Nine features received significant recognition. A couple of them related to the opportunity for continued connection with other men. We identified these as:

1. The opportunity to connect with men.

2. Comraderie and community.

Typical comments in these categories included:

The chance to hang out with the brothers and visit in person with my daily check-in partner.

Having a sense of community.

Male companionship—a connection to others.

Qualities of a Successful Self-Led Group

A second set of responses related to the affective quality of the self-led group experience. We labeled these as

3. A safe place to share
4. Sharing time and attention, being heard
5. A feeling of closeness, intimacy with feelings
6. Being valued for oneself

The most common comments in this area touched on these issues:

The ability to be open about feelings in a safe environment.

Reinforcing self-worth.

Dedication to fun, celebration, support.

Loving attention, listening without being judged, understanding.

The opportunity to be in others' lives as a helper.

Being able to feel close, intimately with feelings.

Feeling the affection other men have for me and how they value me just as I am.

...to remain "banded" together with the guys manifested continued fruition and new growth.

One of the focus group participants commented on this aspect of the experience and related it to some of the strengths and challenges of the self-led group experience, including the need for leadership:

I was fortunate, self-led group, you know. We had Fred come in and we had an educator who was there in our self-led group. So I know what you were saying about how it could very well go to bullshit and all that without proper leadership. It was, ours was very intense, you know. It was like, it was Breakthrough three, no letting up. Yeah, the session work and -

only problem with that space is, you know, you only have little break-out areas and, you know, and sometimes you just get blown away by someone screaming in a room, it just catches you off guard. But . . . I just was fortunate to be able to roll right into this other group and it is a self-led group and it really is my connection right now. (LI)

Content of a Successful Self-Led Group

The third set of categories related to the content of the self-led group meetings and comprised the following:

7. Revisiting the curriculum
8. Continuing to do the work
9. Sessioning
10. Learning new material

Typical comments here included:

Reviewing BT 1 & 2 material.

A willingness to push forward with growth over and above complacency.

For me, 6 months was not enough time to process all my pain, anger and sorrow, so the self-led group allowed time for that.

Sessioning, celebrating successes, supporting each other in difficult times.

Opportunity to lead, share, support.

A focus group participant who had little experience with self-led groups nevertheless was impressed with the concept:

I felt it was really important to stay with the Breakthrough principles, and basically, take the foundation and not move away from it, not say, "hey why don't we try this . . ." because I have to say I remain very convinced that the way [name] put together our program, I mean I know it's not just him . . . but I could find no fault in the way it was done. I just thought it was well thought out. It was direct and it led somewhere, and it kept you interested, and kept you connected and all this stuff. (LI)

Although we do not have the raw data from the survey to fully substantiate it, we received consistent support in focus group and other interviews for this claim: that successful self-led groups are able to balance these three elements: revisiting key aspects of the BT1 and 2 curricula; working with new material; and allowing sufficient time for men to work with their own, immediate or long-term issues. If we add to this, the elements of safe, emotionally supportive environment, an appropriate physical space for meetings, and sustained closeness and genuine connection, the result is, we feel, an accurate portrait of the successful self-led group.

Challenges Experienced in Self-Led Groups

Clearly, one way to characterize the challenges to self-led groups, or the causes of their failure, would be to simply take the corresponding opposites of the features just catalogued: a lack of substantial content, insufficient opportunities for dealing with personal issues, a less than safe environment, and so forth. However, we specifically requested nominations of such factors (item 4.8 in the survey) by asking what challenges respondents had experienced in the self-led group that had impeded their personal continuing growth and development. Responses were both quantitatively greater and qualitatively more detailed and nuanced. Again, we coded the responses and looked for groupings into meaningful categories.

Logistical Factors and Competing Commitments

The first and most obvious category noted were logistical factors, notably time factors, inconsistent attendance, and the difficulty of finding a suitable location (again, pointing to the great value of the new BT headquarters). One focus group participant put it this way:

I remember going through Breakthrough that was the peak of my, you know - I felt the best, during that year period. You know, 'cos I had all this attention, affection, appreciation, etcetera. Since I don't have that every week, I find that that's kind of dropped off and it's easier for me to fall back into my old patterns of behavior. So that's why the check-in's so important. And I - you know - I wouldn't mind doing a self-led group if I could do it during the day and not away from my family . . . and I just don't know how to make that work, really. (LI)

Another mentioned family commitments, which, combined with rumors of problems with the self-led groups, were enough to keep him away:

I would very much like to do it [attend a self-led group]. The only reason I don't do it is because of wanting to be around my children, be at home with family while they are growing up. And I just think, there'd just be two parents, sometimes two parents, we'd be out two nights a week. That's too much for me. The other thing I found out about self-led groups is unless, for some reason, they're not really disciplined, they end up just being bull sessions: guys just talking about safe stuff, and not really doing the work. And for some - I don't know what the magic is, you gotta have somebody there that's going to get these guys focused and sit down, and it's so easy to go off and talk about the Super Bowl or something. (LI)

A third described the competition for a man's time of other types of connection with male friends and the tendency, perhaps, to regard BT as a kind of helpful retreat from the rest of the world and post-BT as a time to rejoin one's wider community, while at the same time coming down from the emotional intensity of the BT program:

My time is really valuable, and what I found myself wanting to do is those couple of nights a month when I could find the time to get out of the house, get out of the house on my own, I tend to want to connect with friends, just go out and have a burger and watch a game or

something like that, you know. That to me I needed to do more. So I tended to go, hmm, I have to figure out what I really want to do, and I tended to think of it in the sense, OK, I'm kind of emotionally drained at home, kind of want to have a little bit of, kind of a moment where I can really have, just, not really have to, you know, relax. I think also, I'm a little more comfortable in a small group than a large group, when it comes to regular meetings. I tend to look at like, gee, I don't really know how I'll be able to do that. After a while, it's really draining. And I don't really have necessarily the cushion to sort of, what's the word I'm looking for here, re-vamp from the sessions of Breakthrough - one or two were exhausting in a lot of ways, you know. And I couldn't see doing that. So a part of me was not just wanting to have fun, but using what I learned in Breakthrough to connect, and also reconnect with my friends, which I've been able to do. I think the thing I should probably be doing for my own sake - and I do see the need for it - is doing the phone check-ins, that's something I did originally, even though I didn't go to, I probably did three months worth of phone check-ins. There was a couple of impasses in the process and I kinda fell out of the loop. I think there was a part of me that sort of, sort of wanted to, OK, now I can fly, let me fly around a bit. (LI)

Lack of Serious Content and Commitment to Process

A second category related to seriousness of content and process. A dozen comments noted the need for the meetings to be "more than a potluck." Another significant group of respondents referred to "stagnation" or "not moving beyond story telling." Specific survey comments here included:

Several men got into the "story" mode.

A tendency at times to "report" rather than delve more deeply into what is going on at the feeling level.

Sticking to the program & doping the work, when the "lazy-force" would attempt to change it to a pot-luck social.

The tendency to get lost in stories and endless check-ins rather than getting outside the comfort zone.

Repetition of old stories; justification of holding on to old hurts.

A number of comments made specific reference to the difficulty of moving out of the "comfort zone":

Sometimes I feel we're stagnating . . . no "new material," we're too accepting of each other's patterns.

Lack of time and lack of participation & commitment by other members. Getting into a rut and not wanting to try new things.

Complacency—lack of desire to grow beyond the comfort zone.

Related to this category are comments on a lack of structure:

Having to re-invent the wheel, the need for . . . well-trying formats.

Getting away from BT principles; the self-led group has turned into a men's discussion group mostly.

Failure to build an effective & positive self-led meeting plan.

One of the focus group participants added this comment:

The ground rules were really important in BT; maybe those ground rules need to be clearer.

Leadership and Inter-Personal Issues

The category of interpersonal issues centered largely around the issue of leadership. Most pointed to a lack of leadership: from the survey:

Lack of leadership; commitment and general reticence of the men to open up.

Personal lack of confidence in ability to help others so far, no guidance in understanding concepts.

Without a strong leader, the group mostly fizzles.

Lack of leadership, lack of continuity; poor focus on issues.

A focus group participant made a similar comment:

Leadership is also an issue. Someone to keep the group moving along. Keeping it dynamic.

Other comments described what happens when one leader emerges and then imposes an overly rigid structure of the group. Yet others related to the lack of skills to deal with conflict:

I think the program did not address fear or conflict and therefore is not as useful as it could be in stressful situations and so people leave.

Lack of ability of the group to resolve internal conflict among members.

Lack of respect as a minimum; group backsliding into being frozen by fear.

One focus group participant summed up the significance of leadership with this comment:

You need mentors. Someone who is identified as very good at it, who can act to mentor others. [name] is able to gently move things on with love and humor, and sometimes more firmly.

One clear finding is that self-led groups are heterogeneous in terms of how far individual members have travelled down the path of personal recovery, growth and self-fulfillment. The resulting mismatches and conflicts are often very difficult for the group to resolve and are thus fatal. Telling comments include the following:

The hardest thing was being in a group with some individuals who still don't get it.

Some members were unable to monitor their behavior and were consequently destructive through their lack of self-awareness of old patterns and the group was unable to reconcile.

Personality conflicts and ego trips caused me to lose interest in self-led groups. During BT 1 and 2 the teachers and counselors were well trained. In the self-led groups after BT it only took one member on a power trip to ruin it for everyone else.

Conclusion

The general picture, then is of groups of men with a great deal of initial enthusiasm and good intentions; who thrive for a while if they have an appropriate meeting place, strong but flexible leaders who are sensitive to the men's needs, and a plan for reviewing BT concepts, examining new material and leaving time for individual's issues to be processed. As any of these facets start to breakdown, the group struggles as individual differences become more prominent, and eventually disbands. At the end of the focus group of BT graduates with little continued participation in the community, several summary statements were offered for the success or failure of self-led groups:

[They] need some structure, but some flexibility too. Find the sweet spot.

[There is a] conflict between trying new things, and holding on to the old program. The group collapsed not being able to get beyond that.

There is an issue of critical mass. Then people start to drop off. Also, when the groups combine, trust is not necessarily built-up.

Causes of Non-Participation in Self-Led Groups

Parallel to the challenges to self-led groups are the reasons given by survey respondents for either never participating in a self-led group (item 4.10) or ending their participation (4.9). Predictably, the same logistical issues were prominent, notably the lack of time, which overlaps in some cases with the travel time involved. Related to the time issue are the cases of men who volunteer as members of a teaching team for a new BT program. This heavy commitment often makes it impossible for the man to continue as a regular member of a self-led group (again, it is worth recalling that almost a third of respondents were, or had been, members of teaching teams).

Groups Becoming Dysfunctional

Beyond the time issue, we were able to document two patterns of decay: one was a slow stagnation over time, without the appearance of significant inter-personal issues; the second was the disruption caused by significantly inappropriate behavior. Comments on the latter were brief, but telling:

Group collapsed around one member's dishonesty.

The level of skillful listening was not what it could have been.

The community part is huge. I see my partner able to reach out to this whole network of folks that can meet him at that depth, instead of, you know, needing to rely on just one or two people. He's got a circle he can be vulnerable and be supported. (SP)

The slow stagnation was often attributed to a lack of intensity or growth in the group:

Those groups were no longer meeting my needs. Plus they were not as intense as BT sessions.

We were not challenging ourselves in any new ways. The repetition can be boring.

I did not feel like I was growing through this activity.

Collusion around staying in the comfort zone. I got bored with it.

I was getting less and less from self-led group and chose to dedicate time and energy to my spousal relationship.

This final comment refers back, of course, to the time issue again. We had confirmations in the focus groups that competition from other sectors of life (family, friends) was significant in reducing community participation. Participants in the spouse/partner focus group mentioned the balance between wanting the man to continue to grow and resenting the time spent away from home.

Satisfaction with Progress

The final category was men who were satisfied with their progress and personal growth and felt that they had reached the end of the BT process:

I felt confident in my assimilation of BT material and could participate well and fully in life and relationships and know how and where to ask for and receive help.

I felt it was time to live my life without BT tasks.

I felt that I had achieved what I was looking for. The group served its purpose.

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES AND PERSONAL GROWTH

The survey also asked respondents to review the list of community activities provided and to describe one or two particular elements of their involvement and its impact on their continued development and growth. We coded the responses for content and tabulated the number of mentions in the various categories. The results are as follows:

Table 5.6.5: Nominated aspects of community involvement with significant impact on personal growth and development

<i>Question 4.11 Review the list of community activities and describe one or two particular elements of your involvement and its impact on your continued development and growth.</i>	
Being an educator, ally or teacher in Breakthrough	34
Attending the summer retreat	34
Regular check-ins (usually by phone) with a BT partner	33
Participating in a self-led group (BT 3)	28
Participating in BT events such as Back to the Basics or workshops with visiting leaders	16
Volunteering in various capacities (committee work, sitting on the BT board, etc)	9
Reading print or online newsletters	2

This can be compared with Table 5.6.1 above. There, respondents employed a rating scale; here (survey item 4.11) they were asked to describe "one or two particular elements of your involvement and its impact on your continued development and growth." This difference serves to somewhat resolve the puzzle of the lower rating for teaching team participation in the 5.6.1 data. This time, there are four items clearly separated from the pack as having most impact, and this time the teaching team participation is tied with the summer retreat, followed by check-in partners and the self-led group. We suggest that this is a more accurate assessment of the relative impact of these particular elements. For the community as a whole, however, Table 5.6.1 is a reasonable estimate.

Participation in the Teaching Team

We can unpack these top four by examining typical comments. Those who have been involved as a member of a teaching team wrote of various areas of satisfaction, fulfillment and continued growth:

Being encouraged to teach and lead has meant much to me. It's a thrill to see men come into themselves right before my eyes.

Being an educator/ally is an enormously challenging and satisfying way to stay in touch with the community. Seeing more men go through the process is just wonderful—being able to help them even more.

Educator: I have worked as an educator eight times and each time I get another valuable lesson in the goodness of humanity. My community of love (healthy caring) gets bigger and

bigger and bigger.

Working as an ally/educator deepens the healing and understanding of the material.

Work as an ally/educator has provided me the opportunity to review, remember and enhance my understanding of the BT concept. More actively, being there for other guys has helped me better appreciate myself and my loving nature.

Working as an ally/educator brought home again the power and grace of the BT message.

It's helped me practice the tools I learned. As an ally/educator, I was profoundly moved by the experiences of the men with whom I have worked every week of BTI & II reinforced for me what I've gotten in BT.

Summer Retreat

The Summer Retreat also proves to be a strong factor in sustaining personal growth. This makes sense, as it is similar to the all-day and weekend events that occurred during BT1 and BT2, as it gives the participants the opportunity for a more intense and intimate experience. The survey data include the following comments:

The summer retreats allowed me to have an intense, powerful experience that jump-started my awareness.

Summer retreat: awesome awareness that the community is big, powerful and emanating love. New direction for work.

I have attended most of the retreats and always bring materials back to my small group.

This is me showing leadership & exposing new thinking to my group. I am challenged by having to present new material and it reinforces my knowledge and ability to explain some ideas which I may have just learned.

A focus group participant whose main contact with the BT community is through attending the summer retreat offered the following appreciation:

Summer retreats, for me, have been my main amazing connection. I mean just the three that I've done since I've finished and last year's especially because of David Richo, and the connection - all the work that I did with Breakthrough, everything that I did was, you know, I grasped, I had it pretty good. But with David Richo, it just really worked for me . . . it was just, he was the magical last little part that made it all come together . . . The summer retreat last year was amazing. Reconnecting with all those men that, you know, you don't really forget them when you see 'em. (LI)

Check-In Partner

Having a check-in partner on a regular basis is clearly easier to organize and sustain than

participating in a self-led group. One of the focus group participants made the specific point that he could not find the time for joining a group but had been unable to keep up the check-ins, which, for him, was sufficient to remain connected to the work. Survey comments included:

Ongoing phone check-ins have been catalytic in my ability to be honest with myself, be intimate with another man and accept myself as I am.

I have enjoyed daily check-ins with the same partner for two years now & it continues to be fun, an honor, a loving commitment to both of us & a life transforming event. One of the highlights of my day. An insightful adventure for adult warriors like myself.

Everyone is invited & I highly recommend it.

Check-ins can really free me up. I have an almost daily chance to create the new world that is growing around me.

Self-Led Groups

Self-led groups, when they do function well, clearly offer benefits in terms of maintaining and moving forward the healing process:

The self-led group offered me a community of men to continue to feel connected with; allowed me to stay sharp with my Breakthrough insights and skills.

The self-led group has helped me heal and refine my own process.

Self-led group—developing trust and intimacy allowed for great depth in connection.

Session work was always primary.

OVERVIEW OF PARTICIPATION

On the basis of these data, we are tempted to postulate two levels of community involvement. The first tier,

teaching team, summer retreat, self-led group, check-ins

provide contact with the community and significant opportunities for continued healing and growth. The second tier, on the other hand

volunteering at BT events, reading e mail bulletins and newsletters, attending occasional events

provide the contact and useful information, but not the growth opportunities. Confirmation for a number of these points came from the focus group of spouses and partners. The role of the community and continued contact was affirmed in a number of comments; for example:

The community part is huge. I see my partner able to reach out to a whole network of folks

that can meet him at that depth, instead of, you know, needing to rely on just one or two people. He's got a circle he can be vulnerable and be supported. (SP)

Another commented on her partner's "deep love for the men of this community . . . He perceives them as his family." A third noted the possibly unexpected consequences of a BT graduate continuing to participate in the community:

My partner went through one of the original courses in 1990 . . . And it's been a real evolution for him, a sort of process. He grew up in a very small family, very military family - very rigid, very, tight - no one expresses anything, you know, at all. And so this has been a real life-changing experience for him. As he's softened, one of the things that's come forward that I've really enjoyed is humor. He can be real silly if he wants to, and I had no idea! So that's really nice. And he never could dance. Would not dance, would not even consider dancing. And he went to a Breakthrough workshop in San Juan Bautista one year and he came back and he said "my commitment was to dance by the end of the workshop," and just all of a sudden he started dancing. And it was, like, just amazing to see someone who had a board up his butt, you know, dancing! It was just really exciting for him and for me. (SP)

There was a feeling, however, that the efficacy of the self-led groups diminished over time. One typical comment (plus, we note, an endorsement for the importance of a permanent Breakthrough facility):

I think the self-led groups are effective on one hand where it's like, for my husband, it's enabled him to make some friends. And essentially what that small group is, is "the guy's night out on Wednesday," and that's cool, I'm perfectly ok with that. But, you know, in terms of getting, fortifying Breakthrough ideas and that kind of thing, maybe just a little, you know. I could see it to be, actually be more structured, and somehow more - actually I think this building [the new BT facility in Carmel] is going to provide that. Actually coming to this environment where the vibes, the Breakthrough vibes are just really, really resonating I think is going to provide the structure that they need. (SP)

And another:

I think some of those long-standing Breakthrough groups, just because of how long people have been together, get to the point where they're such strong friendships that nobody wants to challenge anybody, you know, at times, on their material to challenge each other on their stuff - because it gets very comfortable when people have been together ten or fifteen years. (SP)

There was also some evidence that even when the contact with the community had almost vanished, its importance was not wholly lost and could be rekindled:

Ultimately, the review evenings that Fred gives, those have been really helpful, because for my husband, his small group, although there's an affection for each other, they don't meet regularly any more. And so, like, the last couple of times he's gone to the review of like the basics, you know, for this program, he'll come back and say, "I forgot this part," and here it is again. So it reawakens that skill and that openness to look, where, if he doesn't have that contact, his tendency, and I think it's a collective human tendency sometimes, is to go back into inconsistency. (SP)

There were also a small number of comments on the difficulty for the spouse or partner of connecting with the BT community. Of a small group which met at her house, one spouse commented:

They would be, like really pretty affectionate and then when we'd come back, they'd be even more affectionate. But they would look at me, and just like, I was sort of a different tribe, you know. They were polite, you know, shake my hand, "thank you very much for doing this." But you know, it was just, there was that separation that I really noticed and had an effect on me, that - to pull men and women apart and then do these separate things, and then put them back together, there's that shift because it's completely outside of the cultural norm. And so it really feels strange. If they're all a tribe, then do I fit or do I not fit, you know, at all with this group, or, you know, am I now only going to be relating to this one person, my partner? It's confusing. (SP)

Summary

* The 164 survey respondents reported a strong and consistent pattern of participation in the Breakthrough community; the great majority took advantage of multiple forms of contact.

* Four forms of participation were identified as not only enabling sustained contact with the community but also providing opportunities for continued healing and growth: (1) participation in a teaching team; (2) membership in a self-led group; (3) regular interaction with a check-in partner; (4) summer retreat attendance.

* A second tier of participation opportunities permit community contact, but without significant healing and growth opportunities. These include attending special events; reading newsletters and e mail bulletins; and volunteering at special events or projects.

* Successful self-led groups display these features: an appropriate meeting place, strong but flexible leaders who are sensitive to the men's needs, sustained closeness and genuine connection, and a plan for balancing three content elements: review of Breakthrough material; examining new material; and processing individual issues.

Ch. 5.7 Men, the Father and the Male Role

While specific attention to the father has always been a feature of the BT 2 curriculum (see sections 2 and 5.3 above), we noted that this has recently become a more significant focus for community work as a whole, culminating in the decision to devote the 2008 Summer Retreat to this topic (see Appendix IX for the summer retreat flier). We therefore wanted to include the father in the survey and devoted one simple question (Survey, item 5.7) to the issue, namely: *What impact might Breakthrough have had for your father?*

Before we move to an analysis of those responses, we begin with some samples of Breakthrough men voicing opinions on this topic:

It would have allowed him to value himself! To embrace his goodness as opposed to his role.

He would have had a healthier relationship to his anger.

It would have got him out of his isolation and workaholism to make genuine connections with his family.

He would also have understood what I needed as a boy, such as having my feelings listened to and validated, and we both would have been happier.

He would be aware of all the harm he was doing in the lack of love, the fear he put in my life with his yelling.

He could have found permission to honor his feelings and develop his full potential to heal the severe trauma and wounding that resulted from the combat of the war, his fractured family life, and the environment of scarcity he experienced. He would have felt empowered and connected with his inherent nature. He wouldn't have had to struggle with boundaries and assertiveness. So much suffering could have been avoided.

SIZE OF POTENTIAL IMPACT

The first impression one gets from reviewing the responses to this question were the frequent comments on **the size this impact would have been**. Respondents mostly used single words like *huge*, *immeasurable*, *enormous*, *tremendous* and *incalculable*. More elaborate comments included:

It would have changed his life dramatically.

It would have radically changed his whole reality and life for the better.

What a terrible grief that he will never have this opportunity in his life.

POTENTIAL LIFE-SAVING BENEFITS

Secondly, there were comments about how Breakthrough would have had **physical, life-saving benefits**, that with the benefit of BT, respondents' fathers would have lived longer and been in better health. Typical of such poignant responses:

It would have saved his life: he died at the age of 62 from drinking, smoking, obesity, stroke & isolation.

If he would have had this opportunity, I believe his life would have been much healthier. He died young—very old and tired.

EXPRESSION OF LOVE AND SELF-ESTEEM

A third thread were comments about the possibility that the father, given the benefits of Breakthrough, might have **expressed or showed his love**, including love for himself, hinting that there are self-esteem issues here as well.

He would also have been able to express love in an open way.

He would have learned to love himself more.

My father would have been able to show me his love.

Other comments addressed the **self-esteem** issues explicitly, often including indications of how these Breakthrough men see their father, despite the problems of the relationship in the past:

He would have been able to express . . . what a beautiful man he was.

Would definitely have helped his self-esteem.

It would have allowed him to value himself! To embrace his goodness as opposed to his role.

This last comment, incidentally, is typical of those which led us to pursue this topic to the broader issue of the male role (see below).

ANGER AND VIOLENCE

Fourthly, there were many comments about **anger and violence**, mostly as directed at the son, the BT graduate:

He would have been able to express anger more appropriately.

He would have had a healthier relationship to his anger.

He would not have hit his wonderful son.

I would never have been beaten or shamed.

REDUCE ADDICTIONS

Fifthly, there was the possibility of having **reduced the father's addictions**, covering the predictable range from alcohol and drugs to work and sex. Of these, work (48 mentions) and alcohol (39 references) feature most prominently:

Got him out of his isolation and workaholic nature.

Less drinking would have caused much more availability growing up.

Would have helped him with his shame and addiction cycle.

Dad put most of his energy, time, thinking into his job.

CLOSER WITH FAMILY

Sixthly, we see the counterpart to the reduction or removal of the father's addictions, the possibility that he could have been **closer to the family, and more open to them**; several comments openly linked reduced addictions to being more present and available. A handful added the possibility of a more enjoyable family life as a consequence:

He would have been less controlling, more present, more nurturing.

It would have got him out of his isolation and workaholicism to make genuine connections with his family.

My father would have been around, physically, emotionally and spiritually, he would have been faithful to mom and family.

He may have improved his skills in taking better care of himself, his spouse, his children ...better interpersonal relationships.

More fun to live with.

We would juxtapose to this putative closeness and openness, the possibility of enhanced **listening and communication skills**:

Could have made him a better listener, a better communicator.

He might have talked to his children.

Often, this enhanced communication was focused on **feelings being expressed**, an outcome related to both the expression of love and the enhanced communication skills:

To express his feelings and feel his feelings.

It could have put him more in touch with his own feelings and better able to express them to his family.

He would also have understood what I needed as a boy, such as having my feelings listened to and validated, and we both would have been happier.

Within this category of enhanced family life, another major theme in the survey findings was the outcome of being **a better father to his son**. These responses echo the themes of reduced anger and violence, of being more present and open, and of the appropriate expression of feelings:

He would have dropped his competitive behavior towards me, nurtured, appreciated, encouraged and honored me and helped me to polish my inner strengths and gifts rather than diminish them.

He would be much less angry and more available to me.

He would be aware of all the harm he was doing in the lack of love, the fear he put in my life with his yelling.

He would also have understood what I needed as a boy, such as having my feelings listened to and validated, and we would both have been happier.

He might have been able to be curious and playful with me, instead of timid.

Beyond the family, but parallel to the possibilities posed for that context, several responses speculated that the father would also have had **more and better relationships with others outside the family, especially with other men**:

He might have had more friends.

Helped him with closeness with other men.

A handful of comments spoke to the possibility of the father **escaping restrictions of religion**:

He'd have been less authoritarian and have used his own judgment instead of depending on church rules.

BREAKING THE CYCLE

Another theme readily detectable in the responses to this question was **breaking the cycle** of abusive behaviors and dysfunctional relationships. Responses often included references to the father's own parents, as well as an awareness of other causes of the father's dysfunctionality:

He grew up feeling not enough and wanted more for me, but no comfortable when I got it.

He was trapped by his father's isolation and withdrawal and his mother's tears.

If he would've had consciousness of his activities, he could've seen the ongoing pattern of anger that his father acted out, that my father continued acting out toward me including

self-righteous boundary invasive rage.

He could have found permission to honor his feelings and develop his full potential to heal the severe trauma and wounding that resulted from the combat of the war, his fractured family life, and the environment of scarcity he experienced. He would have felt empowered and connected with his inherent nature. He wouldn't have had to struggle with boundaries and assertiveness. So much suffering could have been avoided.

Again, this poignant comment—*So much suffering could have been avoided*—is very typical of the spirit of the responses to this question. There is a great deal of regret implicit in these data, along with a sense of deep sadness at what could have been not just a deep and satisfying relationship for these men with their father, but in fact the most central and significant relationship of all. To repeat a key comment from above: *What a terrible grief that he will never have this opportunity*. Which might be legitimately be expanded, given the sum of these responses, into: *...and what a terrible grief that I will never have the kind of relationship with him which I now know is possible*.

The issue of breaking the cycle of abusive parenting was a significant theme in the discussion among participants in the focus group of fathers with sons. While many survey respondents mentioned improved parenting skills as a by-product of Breakthrough, these men with sons clearly felt very strongly the importance of consciously changing their behaviors so as not to propagate the subconscious mistakes of their own father. Here are a couple of extended quotations to illustrate:

Looking back five years after I did Breakthrough, I realize I kind of did what my father did and laid out the rules and pretty much held the reins and tried to run a pretty strict ship. But there were two big problems with my being a father, and one of them was that I always wanted to be loved and the other was that that I did not realize that my modeling of low self esteem - which I did subconsciously - was picked up by both my children. Now I'm helping them dig out of that pattern that I passed on to them unwittingly . . . The thing that I really think Breakthrough did was allow me to get the insight of what really matters as a parent, and see how my dad inadvertently passed on to me his own low self-esteem and how I did the same thing, and, you know, I am happy I can help my kids not do that to their kids. (FS)

I think it was Fred who said at the beginning if you don't do anything, don't participate, just sit in the corner, keep quiet and don't ever say anything the whole year, you'll be a better, I guarantee you'll be a better parent. So when I heard that, I thought "great!" It'll be a bonus here. And breaking the cycle, that's what it allowed me to do. I'm so cognizant of everything I do as a parent, and always asking, "Is there a right way? A wrong way?" You just wanna do the right thing. I think this gave me the tools to break the cycle and allowed me to let them be comfortable with themselves, very comfortable with themselves and I think this has given me the tools. (FS)

My son always knows that I love him, and I'm always gonna talk to him, and I'm always here. I love him no matter what, and I never got that from my parents. It was always the

conditional thing. It was, like, well, if you only act this way. . . . Everyone can say they love their kid, but it's how you act, how you act consistently on a daily basis. My parents said they loved us, but their actions said otherwise. It's how you act as a parent. (FS)

So from Breakthrough, I gained the ability to slow down and not react. Sometimes things will still trigger me, and with my kids sometimes I feel the grip, and you know it's frequently so clear that it's my father trying to get at my kids and I can interrupt that. It's like I'm outraged. I don't want him fucking with my kids, you know, vicariously. And I'm not blaming him - he wasn't aware he was giving it to me. But you don't get to blow up, you don't get to dump on your kids. Protecting them means you got to suck it up, you know, and deal with it later. The promise is a hundred per cent true. It does make you a better parent. (FS)

Summary

- * Survey respondents agreed strongly that the Breakthrough program would have had a considerable impact on their own father.
- * The key differences envisaged in the father's life include a longer and healthier life, higher self-esteem, appropriate expression of anger, elimination of violent behavior and addictions, closer relationships with family members, improved parenting behaviors, and a much better, more loving relationship with his son.
- * The men's comments on this issue strongly suggest deep regret and sadness at the unsatisfying relationship with their father, which may well be the most central and significant relationship in their life.
- * Reflecting on their father and their relationship with him often causes Breakthrough men to examine their own parenting behaviors and to ensure that they are not repeating the abusive patterns from their own family of origin, that they are *breaking the cycle of abuse*.

Chapter 5.8 Insights from Partners and Spouses

INTRODUCTION AND DESCRIPTION OF FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

After hearing directly from the men through both the survey and the focus groups, it was important to gain some insight into the perspective of partners and spouses who witnessed their men go through the Breakthrough experience.

Eight women attended a focus group for partners and spouses.³ Seven out of the eight women had been with their men before Breakthrough, and therefore could comment on the pre- and post-Breakthrough transformation. Only one of the women had met her partner after he had completed Breakthrough. One participant has had two Breakthrough graduates as spouses, and knew them both before and after Breakthrough.

There was a significant range in the time since the participants' partners had completed Breakthrough. One participant's partner completed one of the earliest Breakthrough courses in 1990. On the other side of the spectrum, another participant's husband was currently completing the Breakthrough II program. There was also a range in the level of participation of their partners in the Breakthrough program. One participant's partner is a Breakthrough teacher, and two have worked as educators or allies. Finally, five of the women had participated in *Break Free*, the sister program to Breakthrough that has been developed in Monterey and works exclusively with women.

Let's begin with the voices of these partners and spouses and some typical comments from the focus group discussions (all quotations in this chapter are from this one focus group and are therefore not labeled):

It has helped him to move on beyond a couple of difficult areas in his life that he really wanted to explore. So it's opened him up to explore some new ideas. And I've seen a dramatic change in him. It's helping him with ego, self-esteem. It's been a life-changing activity.

My husband was suffering from depression when he got here; now he is open and loving and supporting this group in the best way he can; by a sense of humor that wasn't there before. And I think what was most important for him was the love he received from the other men here, that supported him through starting to love himself so that the depression was lifted and he now is happy, joyous and free.

It's really a legitimate square one for men to begin even just to recognize the pain that so many are living with. And this was certainly the case with my husband. He was so shut down, that, so numb, that I don't even think he realized he was in pain, that he had pain, that he had suffering. And because he was married to me, I was this constant hand mirror for him. And what Breakthrough provided for actually both of us was the initial springboard

³ While there is a significant sub-set of gay men who have gone through Breakthrough, we did not hold a focus group for male partners. This would surely add an important element to the analysis.

for him to even open his eyes and open, begin to open his heart, find a key to it. I mean, it's not even, he can't even accomplish that a hundred per cent. But it was a key. It served literally as square one.

My partner went through Breakthrough before I met him. And he told me all about it. I don't think we could have become partners if it weren't for Breakthrough. The intimacy that we have now, and the trust and honesty is there because he can listen without accepting responsibility for what I say. And he is able to be pretty much transparent, often. It was so amazing to me to meet a man that could do those things, that I went through BreakFree. And we've been building and building those types of skills with each other. So I'm grateful to Breakthrough.

My partner went through one of the original courses in 1990 . . . And it's been a real evolution for him, a sort of process. He grew up in a very small family, very military family - very rigid, very, tight - no one expresses anything, you know, at all. And so this has been a real life-changing experience for him. As he's softened, one of the things that's come forward that I've really enjoyed is humor. He can be real silly if he wants to, and I had no idea! So that's really nice. And he never could dance. Would not dance, would not even consider dancing. And he went to a Breakthrough workshop in San Juan Bautista one year and he came back and he said "my commitment was to dance by the end of the workshop," and just all of a sudden he started dancing. And it was, like, just amazing to see someone who had a board up his butt, you know, dancing! It was just really exciting for him and for me.

How stoic he was from growing up, and now he'll be the first person to reach out and hug a man in the middle of Trader Joe's. I was afraid I was going to be a divorcee. It's been without a doubt the best life-changer and marriage-saver for me.

My husband had walls, huge dense boundaries. Not comfortable with touch, not comfortable with questions. Just not comfortable. And I think those have - I keep using the word softening 'cos I think that's really what's going on, he's just softening and I think for him the work was kinda tearing down some of these boundaries and maybe re-establishing them and I think that's what he's in the process of doing, is creating a different type of boundary, maybe, a healthy-style boundary rather than a wall.

I would agree with that also . . . operate using boundaries instead of walls. And, the same thing: touch, eye contact, all of that stuff . . . I see him with his mother who is 92 that he's never been able to look at, and he actually has a relationship with her now. Which is really amazing, considering she's still very capable of offending.

What is this like for me? It is delightful. It is absolutely wonderful to have him appreciate me, and use the 5 A's. . . . he reaches out to other men to get support. And for me, that is really helpful, because it is not always about me, it's not always about me helping him out. I

know that if I were to die today, there would be a million Breakthrough people in the home. And what is that like for me? It's a relief, it's love, it's joy, it's happiness, it's good.

...for my ex-husband...we still have a positive connection, not just around our kids. He will directly express appreciations to me about who I am, to him or to his kids, and our kids' lives, which is really sweet. That is really sweet. And I get it with my partner, it's coming, it's - I really look forward to, like, Fridays because when he comes home from Breakthrough, or from a weekend, it's like someone has plugged in the Christmas tree. And the softness is there, and the being more present, and more positive, and expressing appreciations directly.

THE IMPACT OF BREAKTHROUGH ON THEIR MEN

As exemplified by the quotes at the beginning of the chapter, the women unanimously felt that Breakthrough has had a dramatic impact on their partners. The women used words like “dramatic transformation,” and “life-changing” to describe the experience. The women acknowledged that before Breakthrough, their partners were struggling with significant issues, many of which resemble the issues that the men reported. Some of the comments include:

He was suffering from depression

He was a rock. Everything went in. Nothing came out.

He was so shut down, so numb, that I don't think he realized he was in pain.

He grew up in a very rigid, tight unexpressive military family.

His anger was expressed by being very withdrawn and non-communicative. A block of wood.

My husband had walls...Not comfortable with touch or questioning.

Every pocket is full of fear. He carries it everywhere.

My husband was engaging in a very self-destructive addition.

My husband has huge issues around fear.

The transformation experienced by the men was described by their partners and spouses with vivid imagery. Men were seen as “softening,” “lightening up,” “being silly,” “laughing” and even “dancing.” Some of the phrases they used include:

...have seen a dramatic transformation; self-esteem; life-changing.

My husband was suffering from depression when he got here; now he is open and loving and supporting this group in the best way he can; by a sense of humor that wasn't there before. And I think what was most important for him was the love he received from the other men

here, that supported him through starting to love himself so that the depression was lifted and he now is happy, joyous and free.

It's really a legitimate square one for men to begin even just to recognize the pain that so many are living with. And this was certainly the case with my husband. He was so shut down, that, so numb, that I don't even think he realized he was in pain, that he had pain, that he had suffering. And because he was married to me, I was this constant hand mirror for him. And what Breakthrough provided for actually both of us was the initial springboard for him to even open his eyes and open, begin to open his heart, find a key to it. I mean, it's not even, he can't even accomplish that a hundred per cent. But it was a key. It served literally as square one.

My partner went through one of the original courses in 1990 . . . And it's been a real evolution for him, a sort of process. He grew up in a very small family, very military family - very rigid, very, tight - no one expresses anything, you know, at all. And so this has been a real life-changing experience for him. As he's softened, one of the things that's come forward that I've really enjoyed is humor. He can be real silly if he wants to, and I had no idea! So that's really nice. And he never could dance. Would not dance, would not even consider dancing. And he went to a Breakthrough workshop in San Juan Bautista one year and he came back and he said "my commitment was to dance by the end of the workshop," and just all of a sudden he started dancing. And it was, like, just amazing to see someone who had a board up his butt, you know, dancing! It was just really exciting for him and for me.

How I see it in my current partner and my ex-husband both is just the lightness comes back. There's more smiling. There's less of that heavy, weighty depression, or acting out.

My husband had walls, huge dense boundaries. Not comfortable with touch, not comfortable with questions. Just not comfortable. And I think those have - I keep using the word softening 'cos I think that's really what's going on, he's just softening and I think for him the work was kinda tearing down some of these boundaries and maybe re-establishing them and I think that's what he's in the process of doing, is creating a different type of boundary, maybe, a healthy-style boundary rather than a wall.

How stoic he was from growing up, and now he'll be the first man to reach out and hug a man in the middle of Trader Joe's.

. . . because when he comes home from Breakthrough, or from a weekend, it's like the lights, it's like someone has plugged in the Christmas tree.

BENEFITS OF BEING A PART OF BMC

While the women were very expressive in characterizing the individual transformation of their men, they also recognized the power and importance of BMC in the lives of their spouses and partners. They frequently commented on the powerful role that the greater community has played in the growth and healing of their men. Examples include:

And I think what was most important for him was the love he received from the other men here, that supported him through starting to love himself, so that the depression was lifted and he now is happy, joyous and free.

The community part is huge. I see my partner able to reach out to a whole network of folks that can meet him at that depth, instead of, you know, needing to rely on just one or two people. He's got a circle he can be vulnerable and supported.

1998, my husband was critically injured, and Breakthrough provided support for eight months. In the hospital, in his room, bathing him . . . That was so huge. We put a schedule in the room, and people signed up for blocks of time. He was so supported. Very, very powerful people from his group, and outside of his group were showing up.

Just his deep love for the men of this community. He perceives this as his family.

One of the things that seems so different about Breakthrough is the emphasis on community and the emphasis on physical closeness for men with each other, which is very different from anything else I'd ever seen. And, at first, you know, to the spouse of someone who's going through that, it can look odd, and maybe even a little threatening at first. But I can see that, you know, what a difference it's made for my husband and his, you know, his own personal growing, and personal - being able to have that closeness with a lot of different people, instead of having it be all about he and I. I think that's pretty amazing.

REAL, BUT INCREMENTAL, CHANGE

The focus group was shown statistics from the survey and characteristic comments that were emblematic of the change that men experienced through Breakthrough. Overall, the participants felt that the statements were generally accurate, and "ring true" based on their experience. However, their comments underscored that change often takes time and happens incrementally. One participant commented on this and her impatience with it:

The first year my husband was involved with, not much happened. I couldn't see much difference really, because I didn't feel he was applying it to his every day - he wasn't actualizing what he was learning - I was impatient, because I wanted some action. My husband joined Breakthrough on an ultimatum. And it was like "I'm outta here if you don't do something, and do it fast." And he has, and we're still together. And I think our relationship, it's stronger all the time, and it's very open, and we really talk about, just about everything that comes down the pipe. I just noticed that sometimes the changes at some points were just incremental. You know, "Are you doing your homework?"

When shown some of the survey responses with respect to enhanced self-esteem, another participant commented:

I don't think that could be my husband's statement. It's too confident, it's too much. But I could see it diluted by two-thirds. He is softening, but he ain't there, you know. It's a long

term process; I believe that, and I can even live with that, as long as something's happening, you know. It's not one of those things where you add water and have instant perfection.

The area where the survey findings were most energetically questioned had to do with the men's ability to "readily" express their emotions, as was captured in this comment from the survey: "At the beginning of Breakthrough, I had huge difficulty identifying my feelings, let alone expressing them, but by the end I could **readily** identify and express them" (emphasis added). While the women saw progress in the ability of their men to express emotion, they felt that the word "readily" was not accurate. In fact, they commented that replacing the word "readily" with "willingness" would be more accurate. The exchange went like this, beginning with this comment in a somewhat doubting tone:

Participant 1: That would be good. We would like that. Keep working guys.

Participant 2: I don't even see that. It is still intellect and judgments that come out instead of real feelings.

Participant 1: I'm glad I'm not alone.

Participant 3: And knee jerk reactions. The old habits. If you say stop, everyone out of the pool, and go, whoa, back up, then maybe Breakthrough can come into play a little bit. But, when we're just talking and stuff, it's not happening.

Participant 4: It is a huge one for guys.

Participant 5: I feel really fortunate, because that is so true for me.

Participant 4: My husband still has the tendency to go numb when those painful triggers happen. He will start doing projects and doing things. Then I'll say, "how's your heart," and pretty soon he will check in. The word "readily" doesn't feel right. He is more able to do it now, but it's not like that [snaps fingers]

Facilitator: "Readily" is actually a big word, isn't it?

Participant 6: I can see there is more of a willingness, that he's more willing to explore and identify his feelings now, and to think about it. It's more "I'm willing to think about this."

Another example of a finding where the participants felt there was more incremental change that was reported is with respect to the statement that the men are able to "express appreciation and love clearly and often." A number of the participants said that this "rings true," but there were some qualifiers added. One participant stated:

It usually comes after a period of pondering. I watch him ponder and think about things, and then he comes up with appreciations and positive comments, and it's beautiful. It's wonderful to hear, and sometimes it makes me think, "Gosh, I'd better become more positive."

The ideas that the man's expressions of love and appreciation sparks the women to be more vocally appreciative was echoed by another participant.

It is a support for me to go after my own efforts to be supportive and appreciative of people in my life, and my expressing my love. His having that kind of attitude helps with our children, going after their support and appreciation, and all of that. So, it does have, it has a nice ripple effect. You know, if your, the man, you know, in your life is working on himself, then it gives you the opportunity. At least for me, it's given me the opportunity and the push to go after my work.

One of the participants whose ex-husband had completed Breakthrough commented that she appreciated his expressions of his appreciation for her:

...for my ex-husband...we still have a positive connection, not just around our kids. He will directly express appreciations to me about who I am, to him or to his kids, and our kids' lives, which is really sweet. That is really sweet.

Another participant described her husband's journey toward more loving expression as incomplete, acknowledging the powerful grip of fear:

I think my husband is capable of seeing the good in people, but he's so fearful that he doesn't know what to do with it, he doesn't know where to go with it. And so, his tendency is not to act, to not, to not express it, to not express a connection. 'Cos I've noticed that if we're together we'll come across somebody we both know and I'll say something that generates some positive conversation. Wow, he's right on it, you know. But he needs somebody to kind of lead him there, to crack it open so that he can step through. He just doesn't have the confidence to take it and run, to take his feelings and run with them, you know. He really likes people, you know, and that's why this is so valuable for him because he's connecting with people.

Participants also acknowledged the importance of the on-going work in small groups, but recognized the difficulty that the men had in keeping the work rigorous. One participant remarked on the potential benefit of the small group meetings:

Ultimately, the review evenings that Fred gives, those have been really helpful, because for my husband, his small group, although there's an affection for each other, they don't meet regularly any more. And so, like, the last couple of times he's gone to the review of like the basics, you know, for this program, he'll come back and say, "I forgot this part," and here it is again. So it reawakens that skill and that openness to look, where, if he doesn't have that contact, his tendency, and I think it's a collective human tendency sometimes, is to go back into inconsistency.

Another participant recognized that the weekly meetings seemed to be slipping into "guy's night out:"

I think the self-led groups are effective on one hand where it's like, for my husband, it's enabled him to make some friends. And essentially what that small group is, is "the guy's night out on Wednesday," and that's cool, I'm perfectly ok with that. But, you know, in terms of getting, fortifying Breakthrough ideas and that kind of thing, maybe just a little,

you know. I could see it to be, actually be more structured, and somehow more - actually I think this building [the new BT facility in Carmel] is going to provide that. Actually coming to this environment where the vibes, the Breakthrough vibes are just really, really resonating I think is going to provide the structure that they need.

Finally, a third participant commented that there seems to be a tension between the evolving friendships and the ability to do work and challenge each other:

I think some of those long-standing Breakthrough groups, just because of how long people have been together, get to the point where they're such strong friendships that nobody wants to challenge anybody, you know, at times, on their material to challenge each other on their stuff - because it gets very comfortable when people have been together ten or fifteen years.

IMPACT ON RELATIONSHIPS WITH THEIR PARTNERS/SPOUSES

One of the emerging themes of the study has been the recognition that while Breakthrough's impact on men as individuals is seen to be "considerable," "enormous," and extremely positive, the impact on the men's relationships has more mixed outcomes. In their survey responses, a number of men described divorce as one of the positive outcomes of their involvement with Breakthrough. There is a saying that goes around amongst Breakthrough men that was spoken by one of the participants in the teacher's focus group:

It is one of the dirty little secrets of Breakthrough. We shouldn't call it Breakthrough, we should call it Breakup. (T)

While this study did not collect the data to comment definitively on this phenomenon, one can understand the dynamic. When one party in a relationship that has achieved equilibrium, even an unhealthy equilibrium, goes through a dynamic transformation, the relationship too must transform. It appears that some relationships do transform in a positive way, while other relationships do not make it. Clearly, while all intimate relationships are affected by the man's participation in Breakthrough, some are strengthened, while others are not strong enough to withstand the transformation.

Breakthrough Has a Definite Impact on Relationships

The focus group provided the full spectrum of examples of how Breakthrough impacts the relationship. On the extremely positive end of the scale, was one participant who felt that Breakthrough saved both her marriage and life:

I was afraid I was going to be a divorcee. It has been without a doubt the best life-saver and marriage-saver for me.

She went on to express how much she enjoys her relationship with her more expressive, loving husband, who is being nurtured by the love he finds in BMC:

What is this like for me? It is delightful. It is absolutely wonderful to have him appreciate me, and use the 5 A's. . . . he reaches out to other men to get support. And for me, that is

really helpful, because it is not always about me, it's not always about me helping him out. I know that if I were to die today, there would be a million Breakthrough people in the home. And what is that like for me? It's a relief, it's love, it's joy, it's happiness, it's good.

On the other end of the spectrum was a participant who felt like her marriage was not going to survive Breakthrough. She stated:

My husband has been in Breakthrough I think about two years and he has changed so dramatically. I've known him for 25 years, we've been together about twenty and I think we're on the cusp of divorce. So for me it's been a somewhat different experience.

She went on to say that while she could see examples of her husband's newly-found expressive, loving behavior in many situations in their life, she felt that she had become a target for his negativity. She commented:

Yes! I'm the easy target for the rage. That takes skill to live through . . . He is able to recognize the good in other people. But, he is having the hardest time to see the good in me. With his family, friends, and foes, yes. He sees the goodness in everyone else. But, he has trouble seeing the goodness in me.

Another participant in the focus group also felt as if she was the target of her husband's venting and anger as a result of his learning and growth in Breakthrough. Having previously been married to another Breakthrough man, and having gone through her own period of healing and growth, she knew that growth is sometimes painful. However, she still was having difficulty with the experience:

And now I'm with a guy who is Breakthrough two, and I'm experiencing a lot of difficulty. The first thing that comes out is a lot of projection, a lot of coming home and teaching me the skills he has just learned. As though I'd never heard of this stuff before. And kind of with a tone like, I should get on this, you know, I should start learning this because it's really great, and that way our relationship would be all better if I would just get into line. And I just have to, you know, shut my mouth. And I got a new mantra: he is teaching what he needs to learn. I had to go to therapy to get that. From a paid therapist, and I just repeat it in my head over and over and try to be really patient, because I know that in my recovery process, the first two years all I did was rage. That's all I did.

Another participant in the focus group expressed how important it is for both parties in the relationship to be willing to learn a new way of being together. She emphasized that the old patterns, many not so healthy, are now gone; and the turbulence that has resulted, is not always easy to handle:

He was a rock: everything went in, nothing came out. He never expressed any negative emotions at all. And I found that to be just fine! What really scared me was this intense anger, throwing things across the room...roaring in a kayak. It was really frightening for a while. What is this? Am I safe, am I not safe? Before, I had all the emotions, and he had none.

Now, we are in this new place, trying to figure out the new balance. And it is a challenge for us. We are still actively working on this piece. And it is not simple, since there are two of us involved.

Ultimately, the women concurred that when a man goes through Breakthrough, there are ripple effects throughout the household. They suggested that it would be a good idea for Breakthrough to consider sponsoring support groups for the spouses and partners, as the impact (positive and negative) is always significant:

There needs to be a support group for the partners of the men going through Breakthrough, because the impact is huge, and it is hard to handle...

Finding the Emerging Men's Culture "A Bit Threatening"

The women also acknowledged that the emergent men's culture was "a bit threatening." They shared that the emphasis on community, on expression and physical closeness for men with each other can feel somewhat odd and threatening. In addition, Breakthrough requires real demands on men's time, with weekly meetings, as well as retreats and workshops.

When one of the participants used the word "threatening," there was a lot of nodding of agreement by the other participants. When the facilitator asked here to describe what she meant by threatening, she said:

Well, he was going somewhere, else. And it took time. And he would have long, intimate time together. And I would hear them. And they would come over, and go off into a room, and "session." At first, it was scary. I can see how it can really be a challenge for a lot of women, who they are used to see in certain way, start to change. And to reach out to men, in this homophobic society.

Another participant described that she appreciated the emerging "men's group culture," and the visible displays of affections between men. However, she also recognized a certain discomfort among the men in their dealings with her. She shared this story as one example:

My house was used for BT retreats for a couple of years. They would be really affectionate with each other, but they looked at me like I was a different tribe. They were polite, but there was this separation that I really noticed. To pull men and women apart, and do these separate things, and then put them back together, there is this shift that is completely outside the cultural norm. It feels really strange....If they are all a tribe, then do I fit or not with this new tribe. And how do I relate to this new tribe? It's confusing. (22:10)

Again, the significance of the transformation, and the impact it has on the relationship between men and women is well-expressed. As it is beyond the culturally-defined and accepted norms, "it's confusing."

In conclusion, this story is a powerful one, reminding us that the goal is not necessarily to stay in the relationship, but rather to improve our ability to communicate humanly and compassionately:

It didn't save the marriage, but it saved the relationship. We are finally divorced now. Before Breakthrough, he actually did Men's Alternatives to Violence. Because I had taken the four kids, and gone to a women's shelter. I had to sleep in the car for 3 nights to say that I wasn't coming back to bed. And finally by the time we were able to separate, he was able to stand there, and we were able to share how sad that was. And there was no anger, and there was no acting out, and there was no threat. We could just be sad. We had worked really, really hard together, and had moved enormously through the process.

Summary

- * The 8 women who attended the partner/spouse focus group confirmed the significant transformation that the men had experienced through Breakthrough.
- * The partners/spouses all recognized the powerful role that the Breakthrough Men's Community has played, and currently plays, in the lives of their partners.
- * The partners/spouses reported that while change has been significant, it is also incremental, and sometimes, there is some back-sliding. They recognized the importance of the on-going work of the BMC in helping their men stay alive and feeling.
- * The partners all reported that Breakthrough has significantly affected their relationships, and not always in a positive way. They recommended that efforts be made to bring the partners/spouses into the process, helping them to better understand the transformational process.

Chapter 5.9 Recommendations for the Future of Breakthrough

Given the second of the three purposes of this study (for Breakthrough to create an organizational development plan for the future, basing proposals for moving forward most effectively on the lessons of the past), we felt it appropriate to include in the survey prompts soliciting the respondents' views on future developments in Breakthrough. The first of these questions was placed at the end of the section exploring the impact of the program. Survey item 3.13 asked the graduates to reflect on their Breakthrough experience and list any concrete suggestions they might have for enhancing the Breakthrough I and II courses. We examined the content of the responses and found a relatively small number of themes, of which only three occurred with any regularity. These data can be seen in Table 5.9.1.

Table 5.9.1. Suggestions for enhancing Breakthrough 1 and 2

3.13. As you reflect on your Breakthrough experience, please list any concrete suggestions you have for enhancing the Breakthrough 1 and 2 courses.

Pedagogy	30
Curriculum	22
Transition and self-led group	15
Growing the Breakthrough community	8
Issues particular to gay men	3
Leadership	2
Other	6

In the first, and most common category, here labeled *pedagogy*, there were a variety of suggestions for how material is delivered, how course sessions are conducted and what activities are incorporated. There was little agreement, however, across comments and little pattern of consensus about a particular aspect of how BT workshops are conducted. The one issue which surfaced with any regularity (but only in 7% of responses) was that of information overload, or, more specifically, too many activities delivering material (lectures, handouts) and not enough for processing and practicing; which corresponds to comments by the Founder (see Chapter 2) that the curriculum is crowded because of the numerous contributing sources of ideas. This theme can be seen in these comments:

Less lecturing, more demonstrative and processing exercises.

Reduce information overload, meaning that the meetings sometimes are too full.

Resist the urge to add more materials, more daylongs, etc.

Consider reducing the information content.

De-emphasize handouts.

More time for pairs and breakout sessions.

Other suggestions included:

More telephone outreach from the staff to participants.

Would like to see more homework assignments-just to sort of mandate review of subject matter.

Some guys repeat stories again and again in their check in. Suggestion: add question, "How would you do it differently?"

It would be nice to have more interactive exercises that would help more men jump outside of their comfort zone. Hike, dance, sing, play and instrument, tell a joke, lead a meditation.

The next category (22 responses) related more to the content of the curriculum rather than the volume of material or the ways in which it is delivered. Here, there was no discernible theme or consensus on any particular gap or needed adjustment. Curriculum-related comments include:

A focus on racial diversity within breakthrough. Integrating young men.

More discussion on how men's energy has impacted women objectification, sexualizing etc.

More time with real conflict resolution work on how to get past a real disadjustment with change as the men get younger less attention on homophobia.

Spiritual practice needs to be stressed more to renew and strengthen from the source.

A handful of comments related to both the content of the workshops (curriculum) and the way they are delivered (pedagogy). One example:

Take the "big picture" lectures and instead of wow-ing us with eye opening revelations, incorporate that material into the program - oppression theory, homophobia/racism, violence & socialization etc. Stop using BT 1 post weekend [final meetings] as an ad campaign/cult sell for BT 2.

The next category (15 comments) focused on Breakthrough 3, the self-led groups, their organization and functioning, and how the transition from BT 2 might be enhanced. Typical suggestions included the following:

Not so much about the courses but about follow-up. If there were only some way we could learn to connect w/ each other.

Maybe some sort of daily planner, papers, calendars to remind men of the BT

principles as they go about their day/work day.

My concern is about what happens to men after graduation. I slowly drifted away from the community and now feel lost and disconnected from all the good stuff. Breakthrough seems more concerned with getting new men and not concerned enough with helping men have graduated stay involved

People should choose about 2-3 men they feel safe with and create their own self-led group out of the larger Breakthrough community after Breakthrough ends and they've been with their group 6 months.

Although there were other opportunities in the survey to comment directly on ideas for the future growth of Breakthrough, a small group of respondents (8 in total) chose to air their ideas here, as in:

The next step beyond the Breakthrough program - something with a community focus - go beyond "wallowing in the wound."

1) More Community involvement, e.g. schools. 2) Sponsor & co sponsor (with the organizations) more community workshops.

Endorse like minded organizations get our names on their workshops as a sponsor & they do the same. BT has done some of this but not near enough. Network! Network! Endorse! Be endorsed by them. Become known as part of the grander community

If the program included more minorities it would illustrate its universality. I assume that its biggest limitation is its cost. Maybe Bill Cosby could endorse it.

Issues particular to gay men were reflected in a small number of responses, but the thoughts expressed were clearly heartfelt:

Acknowledge gay people early in process -- allow gay people to come out to group in a safe supportive manner.

The sex weekend absolutely has to be segregated, with a separate weekend for gay men. Domestic relationships between two men are qualitatively different than between a man & a woman. The mood issues and childhood issues are different. The examples used in Breakthrough for intimate relationships are not appropriate for two men. By the time I had worked through translating them from man & woman to man & man, or figured out that it would never work. I was lost. It's a heterocentrist problem.

Leadership and training for leadership positions were another minor issue, but we quote a couple of suggestions as this is something very much on the agenda of the BT Board.

I would like to see an orderly list of skills a man would need in order to become an ally, educator, teacher.

Encouraging men to become educators, allies and teachers.

Comments which did not fit well into the above themes were collected into the "Other" category. These were all limited to one respondent and tended to reflect a specific individual need or reaction, as in these responses:

I saw several men starting to crack up while facing deep seated issues. Therefore, I would highly recommend psychological counseling and therapy concurrent with going through Breakthrough I and II. Most people can self monitor enough to protect themselves mentally and emotionally. However, even though I had a therapist that I visited once a month along with my wife, sometimes things were stirred up that were very difficult to cope with.

Stop! Stop! Stop!!! Insisting on touching, hand holding, embracing as part of the Breakthrough culture and xxx is as essential. / Respect the physical boundaries of men who don't want to do this. Respect this as something sacred.

Something about ageing-As I have encountered seventy years, I discover life changes significantly. I experience life from a perspective. I've never experienced before. It's such with experiences and it's the last stop before death. I would like to know more about it.

Section VI of the survey is headed "Expanding Breakthrough" and three questions asked for respondents' thoughts about expanding Breakthrough to a wider audience. The first (survey item 6.1) solicited thoughts about what needs to be done to help Breakthrough reach more men. Responses were generally brief and to the point and enabled us to readily categorize them and then tally the totals for each group. The results can be seen in Table 5.9.2.

Table 5.9.2: Ideas for expanding Breakthrough

6.1 What do you think needs to be done to help Breakthrough reach more men?

a. Advertising, use of media	27
b. More and better trained teachers	23
c. Geographical expansion	16
d. Alliances, co-operation with community groups	16
e. Partnerships with educational entities	13
f. Include more minority, low income men	12
g. Raise more money, reduce program fees	12
h. Through graduates' example, word of mouth	11
i. Through collaboration w/ mental health professionals	10
j. More classes, more events	3
k. Write, publish a book about Breakthrough	3
l. Focus on men in prison	3

These items can be further organized into two broad groups: directions for expansion (items c, d,

e, f, j and l) and the means for achieving expansion (a, b, g, h, i, and k). While these ideas were valuable as part of the basis of the deliberations of the Organizational Development group (see Chapter 9), we would note that no single idea received anything like massive endorsement from the respondents.

More detailed comments on these items included the following:

On advertising and the use of media:

Publicity - word of mouth works, but not as effectively as other forms of advertising

On the need for more and better trained teachers:

Develop a teacher training module; it needs skilled teachers who can lead this in their community

On the possibility of geographical expansion:

*Develop a course to replicate BT for other areas
We need to expand classes to other geographic areas and other cultures*

On the opportunities for alliances and co-operation with community groups:

More personal contact with churches, schools, community organizations and clubs to present Breakthrough possibilities

On developing partnerships with educational entities:

Get into community college, universities, high schools, i.e. places where males are able to listen and have structure

On the need for diversity, for including more minority and low income men:

Expand into multi-ethnic communities

On the importance of either raising more money or reducing program fees:

*Reduce costs through external funding/scholarships
Obtain a corporate sponsor with the means to offer publicity and facilities*

On generating expansion through graduates' example and by word of mouth:

*I have noticed that as more men take it they reach out to more men
The example set by graduates seems to be a wonderful way to show other men that domestic violence is not a good choice*

On bringing about growth through collaboration with mental health professionals:

More direct connection to community mental health professionals
Expand to other communities through connections to local counselors

Finally, the expansion which could be made possible by writing and publishing a book about Breakthrough:

A book needs to be written for a national/international audience, preferably by Fred, and preferably a self-help best seller.

The second questions (survey item 6.2) asked respondents to consider how BT as a community and BT men as individuals can effectively include more minority and low income men in this work. Again, the responses were often brief and always clear enough to permit categorization and tallying, producing the results seen in Table 5.9.3.

Table 5.9.3: Ideas for including more minority and low income men in BT

6.2. How can Breakthrough as a community, and you as a community member, effectively include more minority and low income men in this work?

Financially: by raising money for scholarships, reducing program fees, etc	47
Holding events (information meetings, special events, the BT program itself) in relevant communities	26
By word of mouth, example of BT graduates, etc	16
Recruiting minority/low income men into the program, then having them be leaders, role models	15
Assessing needs of minority, low income men and adapting the program accordingly	13
Allying with community groups (e.g. churches)	8
Advertising and marketing in relevant media outlets	7
Making BT available in Spanish and, later, other languages	6
Focusing on men in prison	2

Respondents were very clear that this is a significant issue for Breakthrough, with general comments such as: "This is a weakness. We need to make more overtures to other races and cultures." "We must make more contacts in minority communities." And the self-deprecating: "White people need more permanent connections as opposed to isolation. We are generally not attractive as a group." Comparing Tables 5.9.2 and 5.9.3, however, we see that respondents had little to add in the second set of suggestions: major categories of response (the top 3 in 5.9.3) are exact repetitions from 5.9.2. New ideas revolve around not only recruiting low income and minority men but also adapting the program for their specific needs and then empowering them into leadership positions.

The more specific responses to this question included the following:

On the financial aspect, the need to raise money for scholarships, reduce program fees, or both:

*By seeking our grant money from whatever resources are available
Bring down the cost with scholarship donations*

On the need to spread the message by word of mouth and personal contacts:

By talking with them [minority and low income men] one on one. Nothing beats this: we need to begin a dialogue with other men in minority and low income groups.

I think it starts with each of us including more minority and low income men in our personal lives.

On recruiting minority/low income men into the program, and then having them be leaders and role models:

*Help minority men become leaders/educators
Become "educator/allies without Borders." Keep Breakthrough ever open at the top for willingness to change atmosphere in this ever expanding universe*

On the approach of assessing needs of minority, low income men and then adapting the BT program to meet those needs:

By listening to them and finding out what they need and how Breakthrough would have to change to meet the needs of minority and low income individuals

Finally, on the possibility of spreading the program to men in prison:

Get involved in prison settings, juvenile halls in order to slowly provide an alternative to gangs, violence, anger.

The third question in this section (survey item 6.3) asked respondents for their opinion as to the nature of the greatest challenges that might prevent Breakthrough from expanding and reaching more men. These responses were read for their content and grouped into categories of like ideas.

The first of these groupings (28 responses) involved the different ways in which Breakthrough might be misunderstood in the wider community and especially by men who might otherwise be interested in the program. Such comments included the following:

The perception (stigma?) that this type of work is for indulgent, self-absorbed elitists.

"Alternative," California, hippy, cult mystique.

The cultural belief that male to male emotional and social intimacy is homosexual.

Any explicit identification with the homosexual and/or bisexual culture (such as a Breakthrough sponsored "Gay Pride" booth) has the potential to alienate a significant portion of the male population-precisely those who could benefit from BT.

New age, touchy-feely perception. Expense (money & time) Inability to modify, copy written material to meet needs of various venues of presentation.

Male conditioning. Men are conditioned to think it's weak to seek help.

The second category (24 responses) involved issues related to leadership or the training of teaching team members, combining to suggest a considerable concern that the community cannot grow and develop further without explicit attention to cultivating the next generation of leaders and teachers. Typical points included these:

Lack of qualified engaging educators and teachers.

Extremely dependent on leadership. I think that very few people could do this work.

Need for skilled leaders. Leaders must challenge themselves and check each other to keep the material + demos + tone clear, undiluted, brave + sacred, a second generation must take complete charge + responsibility. This can't be pure enough.

Twenty-two respondents expressed the concern that the white, middle class nature of the BMC might be a substantial barrier to expansion:

Not being able to make BT accessible to men or color and low income men.

work pressure/ \$ pressure.

Money - language barriers.

Lack of funds to make BT available to everyone -- continuing to look white and middle class.

Time and money./ Philosophy, language geared towards liberal whites/ sexism, racism, classicism, homophobia.

Brkthru men need to move out of their 'comfort zone'. Take skills out to men who don't have them, use learn skills in environments that are challenging and socially relevant.

A further 14 responses addressed issues of communication and public relations, the need to spread the word about Breakthrough:

There ought to be a BT book like the big book of AA. The course tends to be too academic and information-heavy.

Word of mouth is great but not enough.

Must be known all over the county constantly & more & more network with groups.

Not having a powerful/persuasive enough presentation. I think personal testimonies are the best endorsements.

On a smaller scale (8 responses), there was attention of the nature of the Breakthrough program and community and the difficulty of expanding these or of replicating them. Particular stress was placed on the significant commitment of time and attention that is required for successful participation.

BT is based on establishing small, trust-based groups. This idea is not easily expanded to a larger community. Its members are self-motivated in making changes in their lives.

It is a long intimate course requiring much support staff (i.e. educators/allies) and then requires a continuous self led group.

Time commitment- the idea of making such a commitment might put some men off.

Another eight respondents were concerned that the male role itself would be a barrier to the expansion of Breakthrough, keeping men away from the program who might gain much benefit from it. Such comments include:

Men need to want to change and heal

Lack of awareness that they need help. Machismo.

Stubborn institutional adherence to the "Male Role."

Also evoking a handful of responses were the issue of funding and fundraising (8 comments), maintaining high standards while growing (7 comments, including "How do we grow & expand but keep the quality?"), and the need for appropriate locations (6 comments).

Finally, there were a variety of isolated comments, largely reflecting individual pre-occupations: replacing the dynamism of the Founder after he retires; reaching a better understanding of the relationships between Breakthrough graduates and the women in their life; making sure that new leaders have appropriate credentials; losing sight of the central mission; and so forth.

Summary

* While a variety of suggestions were made, the only consistent recommendation for enhancing the Breakthrough 1 and 2 workshops was a close examination of the sometimes overwhelming amount of material and how it might be more effectively delivered.

* The most common suggestions for expanding Breakthrough were a more effective advertising campaign and ensuring a supply of well trained teaching team members.

* The most common suggestions for teaching more low income and minority men were expanding the scholarship program, reducing fees, and networking with relevant groups in the various communities.

Chapter 5.10

Relevance of Breakthrough to Domestic Violence Prevention

The Blue Shield Foundation’s core interest in this work was to see what lessons might be learned from BMC that are relevant for domestic violence prevention programs. Clearly, in its current form, Breakthrough does not fit the mold of a typical “Batterer Intervention Program” (BIP). While participation in a BIP is mandated through the judicial system, men join Breakthrough more or less voluntarily. While the men who join BMC have significant challenges and problems in their lives, only a small percentage have come to Breakthrough because of their previous experiences with issues of domestic violence.

However, both the survey and the focus groups both examined participants feelings about the relevance of Breakthrough to perpetrators of domestic violence.

APPROPRIATENESS OF BREAKTHROUGH: SURVEY RESPONSES

The survey provided the men a list of the required topics BIPs are mandated to cover, based on California state law (AB 226). Men were asked to identify the extent to which these issues were addressed by the current Breakthrough curriculum (survey question 5.8). The responses are summarized in Table 5.10.1 below.

5.10.1: Curricular Relevance to AB 226

<i>Question 5.8. To what extent does Breakthrough address curriculum from AB 226: (1 = not at all; 2 = somewhat; 3 = pretty well; 4 = completely)</i>						
	Not at All	Some-what	Pretty Well	Completely	Total Score	Avg.
Effects of Abuse on Children and Others	0	8	39	106	567	3.46
Gender Roles	0	9	65	81	545.5	3.33
Dynamics of Power and Control	1	22	73	56	496.5	3.03
Socialization	0	16	85	51	496	3.02
Nature of Violence	1	23	73	52	487.5	2.97
Cultural and ethnic sensitivity	4	39	73	37	461	2.81

Overall, the averages range from 2.81 to 3.46 on a 4-point scale, which corresponds to “Pretty Well” in the table. Clearly, respondents feel that Breakthrough addresses “pretty well” the major themes that BIPs are required to address. The two themes which were rated the highest are: 1) the effects of abuse on children and others; and 2) gender roles. The theme of “cultural and ethnic sensitivity” received significantly lower scores than the other topic areas. This is not surprising, as the Breakthrough curriculum focuses heavily on the dynamics (and associated traumas) of male socialization and its link to homophobia and gay oppression. While this aspect of “cultural and ethnic sensitivity” is addressed in the curriculum, the curriculum does not

explicitly address other dimensions of ethnic or cultural sensitivity (ie, racism, sexism, anti-semitism, ageism, etc.).

The survey then asked the men what they thought would have to happen to Breakthrough for it to have a “significant and positive impact on perpetrators of domestic violence” (survey question 6.4). The responses are indicated in Table 5.10.2 below:

Table 5.10.2: Impact of BT for Domestic Violence

<i>Question 6.4. What would have to happen for Breakthrough to have a significant and positive impact on perpetrators of domestic violence.</i>		
Category	#	%
As is:	86	57%
Minor modifications	53	35%
Major modifications	7	5%
Not appropriate	4	2%
Percent “As is” or with “Minor modifications:”		93%

The results are striking. 93% of the respondents feel that Breakthrough “as is” or “with minor modifications” would have significant and positive impact on perpetrators of domestic violence.

APPROPRIATENESS OF BREAKTHROUGH: FOCUS GROUP INSIGHTS

The focus groups gave us the opportunity to look more closely at this question. Each focus group was asked how Breakthrough could be made more effective to work with perpetrators of domestic violence. In almost every focus group, two streams of conversation resulted from this question.

Fear of the “Mandated Men”

At first, the groups struggled with the dynamic of having “mandated men” participate in a traditional Breakthrough group. The initial concern was that a person mandated to join Breakthrough would not have the same motivation as somebody who joined on their own volition. A participant in the educator/ally focus group expressed this concern:

They still have to want to be there. As a member of a twelve-step program I see guys court-ordered to Alcoholics Anonymous and they sit there and go [leans back, folds arms, simulates grim silence], and they come in late and they're gone early, they're gone right after they get their little court card signed, and you know you see them drunk on the street again. I don't think we need to get into a position of having to make someone healthy that doesn't wanna be there. That takes away from us. (EA)

Another participant in the educator/ally focus group remarked that the Breakthrough concept of “bringing every guy to the center” could be a very appropriate aspect of the curriculum, but wondered how this would work with mandated participants:

That's the core component, the core concept of what makes Breakthrough work is this concept of "every man to the center." So how can an offender organization that's got a room full of guys that don't want to be there -they're doing their time because the court ordered it - how do you invite them in? How do you make them a part of the center, and strip away those defenses? (EA)

A participant in the Fathers of sons focus group said:

The mandated aspect is another story. Bottom line is that Breakthrough guys have chosen to do it. You've changed the flavor, and it is a different scene. (FS)

Another dimension of this concern addresses the finding that men need to have something "at stake" in order to want to make a change. The feeling was that for many Breakthrough men, this is their last chance to recover and save their marriage or relationship. In addition, the socio-economic character of the Breakthrough men show that they also have significant social and financial capital "at stake," different from many of the participants in BIPs, who tend to come from lower socio-economic backgrounds, and are already in many ways, on the margins of society. A participant in the Educator/ally focus group observed that:

I mean what is the model, the typical model, of a man, a Breakthrough man? He's probably middle class, maybe upper middle class, he's white, you know, all these kinds of things - these are all guys with stuff at stake. If you don't have much at stake, I don't know that we'd have much to offer these people. (EA)

On the other hand, it was pointed out that desperation can be a powerful motivating force. Another participant in the educator/ally focus group remarked:

There are guys, I can think of one guy in particular who, you know, was an offender, domestic violence offender, had a lot of anger, deep anger, really troubled childhood, you know, did jail, and the program saved his life. But he came here willingly. Oh, yea, absolutely, I worked with guys like that, you know, in Breakthrough, who had extreme history of violence early in life, you know gang violence kind of violence. He was able to work through that, because he was able to finally find a place of loving, of being held lovingly. And the same thing with, you know, extreme anger is a pretty general term, so I don't know, it does have to be voluntary. It has to be someone who wants to do that. Maybe since they've hit bottom, they'll do anything. (EA)

In response, one participant in the anger and violence focus group reminded the group that not all Breakthrough men come to the process so voluntarily:

Men who are mandated to go to Breakthrough will have more resistance to the process than men who choose to be there. However, I think it's also fair to say that the men who choose to be there are also pretty resistant to the process and usually they're there out of desperation or their wife has told them to get help or I'm out of here. Sometimes, the wife makes the men go to Breakthrough, sometimes the addictions and life being out of control

and sheer desperation drives men to be there. Fortunately, Breakthrough seems to be quite good at dealing with men's resistance to the process. I think, maybe, for men who are mandated to be there they might wear it more on their sleeve. Even I've been in a class where one man was so resistant that, I mean, it just wasn't going to happen. He just wasn't there, he wasn't ready to do some of the things that it called for, and he didn't stay with the class. (AV)

Curricular and Logistical Issues

Ultimately, the conversations in the focus groups evolved around to looking at specific logistical and curricular changes that might be necessary to integrate “mandated men” into the program.

Finding a Balance Between “Mandated” and “Voluntary” Men

One of the dominant themes was the fear that the important group process not be dominated by a sub-set of the men. The importance of the group dynamic for the Breakthrough process requires that all men get some time and space to do the work that they need to heal and grow. There was some concern expressed that the violent offenders would require too much of the group's energy. Some focus group participants suggested that it would be important to keep the number of “mandated men” to a minimum, so that the power of the group could effectively embrace them. Otherwise, there was a concern that the magnitude of the needs of the “mandated men” might overwhelm the capacities of the teaching team.

Some guys get a lot of attention; often they are the problem children. They get a lot of attention from the teachers. Often they are put with the best group leaders. They are given extra attention.

Another participant in the anger/violence focus group commented:

It's something that scares me the more I think about it: I wonder how you could do it if everybody is a raging offender. How does their energy not overtake the educators' energy? That's even a basic element of how men work: they'll form a group within a group, and, especially if they're in a defensive posture, they'll form a group within a group, and kick the other people's ass! It's such a natural thing to do I couldn't imagine they wouldn't do it. How do you diffuse that? (AV)

The groups also recognized that the diversity of issues that men bring into Breakthrough is a real strength. One participant in the teacher focus group commented that:

The reason Breakthrough works now is that we have a diversity of men. Some men with some slack, the men with some slack who can support the guys who have a history of domestic violence or perhaps who are acting it out now. Both parties win, the guy having the problem, and me, I'm a middle-class, sort of normal white guy, I finally get to help, I finally get to be with someone who really needs me, and I get to sort of know that need. So if you were to try to transplant this into an environment where everyone who's in there for domestic violence, might not work. (T)

A participant in the anger and violence focus group recognized that:

We are all so different in our issues, as a community or as Breakthrough one, there may be 3 or 4 that have domestic violence issues, and some with sexual issues, and you know, across the board. It comes down to that we can have different issues, but that the feelings are the same. We've got the same pain, we've got the same feelings. I've yet to see that in one of the mandated classes. There's nothing to balance out that field of what brought us here in the first place. (AV)

One of the participants in the anger and violence focus group suggested that it was important to find the right mix of mandated and voluntary guys in a course:

Having a room full of men that are forced to be there bothers me. I agree with you that when we came we were resistant because our group just didn't know, but one thing that Breakthrough does, it did it for me over and over and over again, and you did it and you did it tonight: you inspire me to stretch myself, to do things. So, then, a solution, a possible solution I see is this, is to initiate this, you start out with three quarters mandated and one quarter not. 'Cos the mandated guys are just there to, jus "Fuck, I'll just waste my time and blow off my time here and then when I'm done with this . . ." (AV)

Clean and Sober

One of the educator/allies commented that in his experience, men need to be clean and sober and ready to change before joining Breakthrough. He stated:

The hardest time I had was working with a man with active alcoholism. 'Cos he *glug glug* before and *glug glug* after. And you can't work with them. They're not ready. They're not good, they're not bad: they're not ready. SO, how do we decide in this process who's ready? 'Cos that's our decision. How do we decide who's ready and who's not? Maybe a certain period of time of sobriety? I tell all the guys that I sponsor, "not before your first year." 'Cos they aren't ready, they're still dealing with what life looks like, not life. (EA)

Changes in the Curriculum

From a curricular perspective, a number of issues were raised. There was some concern over the issue of anonymity, once the program is connected to probation and the judicial system. There was also concern about the impact of being influenced by the curriculum of a state-mandated program. One participant in the educator/ally focus group said:

I don't wanna see what I got and what it seems like everyone in this room got diluted by a big organization telling us what we're gonna do. (EA)

It was acknowledged that there could be more contents in the curriculum specifically about issues of violence and anger. One participant in the teacher focus group said:

We could spend more time on anger and violence. Make that a real focus of this work. Add a few more sessions on that - give them love. That's what's going to turn them. (T)

Another teacher emphasized the need for more material around the overall systems of oppression:

Certain topics might be more appropriate for violent angry offenders. Probably need more material around the isms: sexism and racism. (T)

Finally one participant recognized the need for additional training and support for the teaching teams, if Breakthrough were to move in this direction.

There needs to be better training for educators and allies. There needs to be more clinical training if we are going to do this work. This stuff reaches deep, and are we really trained well-enough to be able to handle the real deep, dark journeys? (EA)

CONCLUSION: THE BOTTOM LINE IS LOVE

In every focus group, this message came out loud and clear. Men who are perpetrators of domestic violence need love, more than anyone else. And if not Breakthrough, where are they going to get it?

I think we could experiment with that and fine tune it. I think we can help people come in, and be loved. Be accepted and loved. Fundamentally loved. (EA)

Love. That is what these guys need. Where in the hell are you going to get LOVE if you are one of those guys? (EA)

The opportunity for Breakthrough to bring this powerful process to a group in such critical need was summed up this way by one participant in the fathers of sons focus group:

As a painting contractor, I've worked with lots of these guys in the past. I see how angry these guys are. Anger, acting out. Fuck you! Kids coming up now, they need it so badly. Even if two of them get it, it's worth it. If you only get two out of twenty...and if they only got one concept, it would still be powerful. (FS)

Summary

- * Respondents strongly feel that Breakthrough addresses the curricular requirements laid out for Batterer Intervention Programs by AB 226.
- * 93% of respondents felt that Breakthrough “as is” or with “minor modifications” would be appropriate and effective with “mandated offenders.”
- * It would be important to find a balance between “voluntary” and “mandated” men in the current Breakthrough program.
- * Breakthrough can be effective in helping offenders heal through love, self-esteem, and rediscovering their “inherent nature.”

Chapter 6

Summary and Discussion: The Breakthrough Program's Impact

THE IMPACT OF BREAKTHROUGH

Consideration of the totality of the data gathered during the course of this study leads us to the following general conclusion: Over the past twenty years, Breakthrough has enabled over 600 men to achieve considerable improvement in the quality of their life by overcoming the effects of abusive child raising practices and the conditioning of the traditional male role in order to overcome fear, isolation, depression, addiction and repressed anger, and attain fulfillment, authenticity, self-esteem and joy.

Two findings in particular stand out as especially noteworthy.

Extent of Transformation

Survey respondents were nearly unanimous in lauding the significant impact that Breakthrough has had on their lives. **91% of respondents stated that Breakthrough has brought about “considerable” or “enormous” change in their lives.** This finding is even more significant when one considers the boldness and self-confidence required to use the word “enormous” as a descriptor for one’s own transformation. This finding was further supported by the focus groups, where the men expressed confidence in this finding based on their own experience in Breakthrough.

Clearly, Breakthrough is having an “enormous” impact on the lives of over 600 men in the Monterey region.

Relationship to the Expression of Anger and Violence

A second area where the data is striking is with regard to men’s relationship to the expression of anger. Pre-Breakthrough, only 16% of the men felt that they expressed anger either “mostly appropriately” or “always appropriately.” **However, after Breakthrough, 80% of the men felt that they expressed anger either “mostly appropriately” or “always appropriately.”** In addition, the percent of men who stated that they usually “suppress” their anger declined from 35% to 4%.

Breakthrough has had a dramatic impact on men’s response to conflict situations. While the men did not report frequently resorting to physical violence before Breakthrough, they did report significant decreases in the use of passive-aggressive behaviors (sulking, withdrawal, being unavailable) and verbal abuse (insulting, shouting, stomping, yelling) after completing Breakthrough.

This transformation was supported by the spouse/partner focus group. While the partners raised questions as to the completeness of the transformation, they gave rich testimony to the significance of the transformation.

THE IMPACT ON INDIVIDUALS

The main facets of this impact on individual participants can be characterized by the following

before-and-after statements:

1. *Before Breakthrough*, the respondents in our study lacked self-esteem, self-confidence and self-knowledge; *after Breakthrough*, they were more comfortable with themselves, more confident, more aware of their own true identity and more in touch with their authentic inherent nature.
2. *Before Breakthrough*, the respondents in our study reported being isolated, hopeless, depressed and powerless; *after Breakthrough*, they were hopeful and empowered, feeling balanced and genuinely connected with others (and especially with men).
3. *Before Breakthrough*, the respondents in our study reported great difficulty identifying and expressing emotions, and were often withdrawn, quiet and passive; *after Breakthrough*, they were able to readily feel, identify and appropriately express their emotions and be more open and genuine with people.
4. *Before Breakthrough*, the respondents in our study experienced anger without understanding its source, without being able to express it appropriately and thus often suppressed it, leading to withdrawn or passive-aggressive behavior; *after Breakthrough*, they understood the causes of their anger and hurt feelings, and can deal with and express them appropriately.
5. *Before Breakthrough*, the respondents in our study reported being often anxious, fearful and, in particular, afraid of other men; *after Breakthrough*, they are much less anxious, more comfortable, more open and loving with other men.
6. *Before Breakthrough*, the respondents in our study had no understanding or control of healthy boundaries and often allowed others to dictate their behaviors and feelings; *after Breakthrough*, they have in place a solid and healthy boundary system and can deal appropriately with the feelings and behaviors of others.
7. *Before Breakthrough*, the respondents in our study reported frequent and inescapable patterns of addiction, involving excessive devotion to work, alcohol, sex or drugs; *after Breakthrough*, having healed the old hurts which triggered these addictions, they have a measured approach to all aspects of life, changed attitudes towards sex, and many report reduced or zero use of alcohol, cigarettes and drugs.
8. *Before Breakthrough*, the respondents in our study reported being stuck in the traditional male role in this culture, with the fear and aggression this involves; *after Breakthrough*, the respondents describe their ability to choose for themselves their own ways of being a fully alive and human male.
9. *Before Breakthrough*, the respondents in our study reported having poor communication skills, with little ability or patience for listening empathetically without interrupting with quick-fix solutions; *after Breakthrough*, they acknowledge their excellent active listening skills and their ability in general to communicate appropriately and solve problems in a collaborative fashion.

CHANGE IN BEHAVIOR AND ATTITUDE

The respondents were able to identify concrete examples of changes in their behavior which are consistent with a more expressive, loving, communicative and engaged way of being in the world. The most common areas where the men identified significant behavioral changes are:

- Actions toward and behavior with their spouse or significant others.
- Actions toward or behavior with other men
- Expression of feelings
- Approach to taking care of themselves
- Expression of adult love
- Being true to themselves in relationships
- Communication skills
- Not being controlled by their old fears
- More appropriate responses to the stimulation of old hurts
- Actions toward their children
- Controlling or limiting addictive behaviors
- Dealing effectively with other people's emotions

While behavioral change can sometimes be misinterpreted as indicating an underlying attitudinal change, in this case, the men also expressed a clear shift in their attitudes about themselves (self-esteem, self-worth), about the male role, and about the nature of healthy adult relationships. When asked for concrete examples of this attitudinal change, these areas were identified most frequently:

- Self-worth
- Awareness of old patterns and triggers
- Understanding of the male role
- Attitudes towards sex
- Understanding of anger
- Understanding the importance of communication and listening

The data is rich with stories and examples of how men have developed a new understanding and respect for themselves, and a new repertoire of behaviors to engage more lovingly and authentically with the world around them. Let's conclude with a few of the men's voices:

Breakthrough saved my life. I live instead of coping.

I used to become my anger—it was uncontrolled. Now, I honor it, know it is not me, and act appropriately. Boy, is my family glad, and so am I.

I could never have expected that life could be this good in a few short years.

THE IMPACT ON BREAKTHROUGH PARTICIPANTS AS A GROUP

While Breakthrough has had a significant impact on individual behaviors and attitudes, the study

also identified a significant transformation at the level of the group. This is key, as Breakthrough is attempting to re-socialize men into engaging in a more loving, and expressive way in society. Therefore, the group or class is more than just a vehicle for the transmission of information; it becomes a space for the men to be in community in a different way.

As a result of the aggregation of the above individual changes, there is a concomitant menu of shifts in group behaviors and attitudes that was clearly identified. The following key features emerge from our data:

1. *Before Breakthrough*, the respondents in our study as a group were separate and isolated individuals, struggling privately with their own issues and suspicious of other men; *after Breakthrough*, they became a tightly knit, supportive, loving community, helping each other along the path of recovery.
2. *Before Breakthrough*, the respondents in our study were competitive, distrustful, defensive individuals, communicating superficially with others; *after Breakthrough*, they had become trusting, respectful and open, being loving, vulnerable and deeply connected with each other.
3. *Before Breakthrough*, the respondents in our study felt like learners with little value, often confused and muddled; *after Breakthrough*, the groups were collective knowledge holders, with much greater clarity and value.
4. *Before Breakthrough*, the respondents in our study often felt heavy, intense, awkward and afraid of physical contact with other men; *after Breakthrough*, they had become much lighter, more fun-loving and more comfortable with physical closeness and nurturing.
5. *Before Breakthrough*, the respondents in our study feared physical contact with men, and were uncomfortable touching or hugging each other; *after Breakthrough*, they were comfortable with, and even sought out close physical contact with men, hugging freely, openly and honestly.

THE PROCESS WHICH HAS FACILITATED THE IMPACT

It is also important to place alongside these findings the corresponding aspects of the process. Our study indicates that the Breakthrough program has never stagnated or become complacent. Rather, there has been a steady process of expansion and renewal, both in terms of the curriculum itself and of the process of its implementation. In particular, the steady recruitment of Breakthrough graduates for the teaching teams has guaranteed the consistently high quality leadership and support which almost all participants report as a key feature of their experience. While the program has been given structure and systematicity through the preparation of course binders, supported by audio recordings, powerpoint slides and so forth, it has maintained some degree of flexibility. A healthy process of constant review and revision has been in place since the earliest years. The present study, however, is the first major comprehensive evaluation and the findings will be a key input to a continuing effort to plan for future development and appropriate expansion.

DELIVERING ON PROMISES

A further summary statement can be posited by juxtaposing our findings with the stated goals of

the Breakthrough program.

According to the manual, “Breakthrough 1, Reclaiming our lives, is a 17-week workshop that covers the basics of self-esteem, intimacy, boundaries, feelings, communication, healing the male role, addictive behavior, and boyhood trauma.” In our view, the data presented in this report indicate very strongly that these concepts are taught, demonstrated, and learned effectively and consistently, and that the accompanying skills (listening, using affirmations, creating and deploying boundaries and the like) are developed to a considerable extent. To some extent, of course, these items represent long-term goals and the program itself estimates that the work requires a minimum of five years to reach anything close to completion. We have noted, for example, how identifying and expressing feelings *readily* is an aspect requiring patient attention and practice over many months. This said, however, the findings of this study, confirm that the goals of Breakthrough 1 are achieved squarely and unequivocally.

In the Breakthrough 2 teaching team manual, one expression of the overall goal of the workshop is as follows: “Breakthrough thinking is a unique form of problem solving: it involves making a situation better by first raising your expectations higher than anyone believes possible and then looking for ways to make your vision come true” (adapted from Deepak Chopra). The overview continues with this overriding principle: “Inherent nature with emphasis on goodness, mattering, and connection to each other and all of Life as the starting place.” The basic themes are “Principled Living” and “Human Intimacy,” which are combined in the statement that Breakthrough 2 is “about developing a foundation for (1) principled living based on the concept of inherent nature, (2) human intimacy based on our true nature, not the male role, (3) a self-led group to provide a community for long-term growth and support; and (4) membership of a larger community” (BT2 manual, page R7).

The data presented in this report again confirm that the first two of these four items are solidly and consistently achieved: that participants report the value of the concept of inherent nature and the widespread and profound changes it has made to their life. Similarly, moving from the traditional male role to the fully human man, capable and desirous of entering into truly intimate relationships is also successfully achieved. With regard to (3) and (4), the picture is a little more mixed. While the retention of approximately one-third of graduates as active participants in the BMC is a considerable achievement, it nonetheless implies that two out of three eventually lose contact with Breakthrough. Despite the information and training provided in the final weeks of BT2, the self-led groups present a mixed record, with not many continuing to meet more than two years beyond graduation and a significant number beginning to struggle within weeks of their formation. Not surprisingly, our interview data show a number of individuals pointing to the self-led groups as the aspect of Breakthrough most needing attention at the present time.

However, the community-related goals, while fundamental to the vision of Breakthrough, are clearly the most ambitious and the most challenging, and current achievements may still be regarded as impressive. As such, they do present one area for enhanced performance. Meanwhile, the remaining goals of Breakthrough 1 and 2 represent areas of strikingly solid and resoundingly consistent achievement.

THE FUNDAMENTAL NATURE OF BREAKTHROUGH

Finally, we turn to the issue raised at the end of Chapter 2: is Breakthrough a program which strengthens the hearts and minds of men? Or is it a program of healing and recovery? We have described in Chapter 2 the Founder's view that the fundamental purpose is to bring participants to a level of self-esteem, self-control and self-knowledge so that they can make informed decisions about their reality, be in touch with their inherent nature and be able to have rich and meaningful relationships with people through their powerful abilities to listen empathetically and express their feelings appropriately (including anger). However, we also saw, especially in discussing the Founder's collaboration with Charlie Kreiner, that this strengthening program inevitably brings healing along with it. The findings of this study overwhelmingly confirm that Breakthrough both heals and strengthens. Here is one rough indication: of 784 statements in the survey data which are more than single words or very short phrases, 206 are about healing, 227 relate to strengthening and 351 address both. This is, of course, a subjective reading, but we feel it equates with this central finding: Breakthrough is a program which both strengthens men's hearts and minds and heals their childhood hurts, thus enabling the emergence of the fully adult male.

Summary

- * Over twenty years, Breakthrough has had a considerable impact on the life of over 600 men in the Monterey area.
- * This impact is documented in both individual terms and in terms of the development of a cohesive and active community, committed to furthering its goals and spreading the impact to more and more men.
- * The goals of the Breakthrough 1 and 2 workshops are consistently and richly achieved.
- * Breakthrough is a program which both strengthens and heals the men who participate.

Chapter 7

Summary and Discussion:

Implications for the Domestic Violence Prevention Field

This chapter looks at the implications of BMC for the domestic violence prevention field. First, it provides a brief comparison of the Breakthrough participants with the participant in Batterer Intervention Programs (BIPs). Then, it looks at the insights that can be gained from Breakthrough from three perspectives: curricular insights; pedagogical insights; and community-building insights. Finally, it presents three potential strategies to help BMC integrate more fully with the domestic violence prevention field.

INTRODUCTION: BREAKTHROUGH MEN AND BIP MEN ARE DIFFERENT—OR ARE THEY?

To begin with, it is important to recognize that the typical participant in the Breakthrough Men's Community and the typical participant in a Batterer Intervention Programs (BIPs) mandated by the Department of Justice are, in many respects, different. Breakthrough men are largely middle and upper-middle class, and are well-educated—75% have a college degree. Studies show that participants in BIP courses are, on average, less-well educated and are more economically marginal. While the men who have been mandated to take a BIP have a history of domestic violence or abuse, only 9% of the respondents identified domestic violence as a motivating factor for joining Breakthrough. In fact, the Breakthrough participants report sulking, emotional and physical withdrawal, and passive-aggressive behavior as their most common response to interpersonal conflict.

Clearly the men who join Breakthrough and the men who are mandated to enroll in a Batterer Intervention program are different.

However, they are all men, and as such, they have all experienced the pain and shame of the oppressive male socialization process. Isolation, anger, fear, and distrust are deeply rooted in the core of their beings. While the typical Breakthrough man has developed more socially-acceptable responses to this deep-seated pain (emotional and physical withdrawal, sulking and passive-aggressive behavior), the BIP man has resorted to a more direct, physical express of this pain, hurt and deep sense of disrespect.

Therefore, when reviewing the following summary and recommendations, we want to both acknowledge the differences between Breakthrough men and the men who enter mandated Batterer Intervention Programs; but also, we want to recognize their similarities. While the Breakthrough men clearly resort to less physical abuse with their intimate partners, the pain, shame, anger, and distrust that fuels the violent outbursts for batterers is also deeply present in the hearts of the Breakthrough men. This came through very clearly in the data.

Furthermore, we want to dispel the idea that because Breakthrough is a voluntary program, and BIPs are mandated, they are wholly different. The data show that for many men, Breakthrough was a last-ditch effort to save a failing marriage or relationship. This was well-expressed by a focus group participant who stated:

But, the guys who have chosen to come are really there out of desperation too. Not always such an easy choice. Maybe not the judge, but maybe the wife, or the drugs, or something drove them there.

Taking these differences into account, we strongly feel that the domestic violence prevention field has much to learn from the work of the Breakthrough Men's Community. The findings with regard to the expression of anger is quite dramatic, and clear evidence of the relevance of Breakthrough to the domestic violence prevention field

Transformation around the Expression of Anger

Central to the issue of domestic violence is anger, as it is the feeling that generates the outbreaks of physical violence, or other forms of abusive behavior. It is with respect to anger issues, that Breakthrough has had the most significant impact. Pre-Breakthrough, only 16% of respondents claimed that they expressed anger either “mostly or always appropriately.” However, post-Breakthrough, **80% of the men stated that they expressed anger “mostly or always appropriately.”** This transformation is the singular most powerful finding of the study. Based on this finding alone, though with strong support from the qualitative data and the focus groups, there is strong reason for the domestic violence prevention field to see what lessons can be learned from the Breakthrough Men's Community.

INSIGHTS FROM BREAKTHROUGH FOR THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FIELD

While BIPs attempt to control and divert the violent and abusive behavior, the deep pain that is the source of the violent behavior frequently remains unaddressed. The fire continues to burn deep inside the offenders, and re-offense is a real future possibility. This was powerfully expressed by the men who participated in the anger/violence focus group. They clearly identified how Breakthrough facilitated a deep healing process, which was distinctly different from the work they had experienced in previous anger management and domestic violence classes.

Over and over, the data point to three aspects of growth and awareness which are central to this deep healing process. They are:

- 1) Breakthrough reinforces men's own internal sense of self-value and self-esteem , recognizing the goodness of their “inherent nature;”
- 2) Breakthrough helps men to explore the source of their pain and distress in early hurts and childhood trauma, and to discharge and reduce the volatile load they carry through life; and,
- 3) Breakthrough helps men to understand their feeling states, and to be able to express their feelings, knowing that they are separate from their current reality and sense of self.

Achieving this goal consistently for men with diverse backgrounds and issues is no easy feat. The strength of the impact is a testament to the continuous striving on the part of the founder and teaching teams to fine-tune the program (both its content and its pedagogy), and to create a community of men where this alternative way of being in the world is reinforced and supported. In other words, the deep-healing process is a result of a well-developed curriculum that helps men recognize their goodness and heal their early hurts, and which is delivered in a deeply

personal and interactive way that helps them to build meaningful connections with the other men in their group. And perhaps most importantly, Breakthrough provides its men opportunities for further involvement and growth, where they can actively be a part of a community of men and support each others' continued healing and growth.

Though they are not completely distinct categories, we have identified three areas where important insights and lessons can be drawn from Breakthrough for the domestic violence prevention field. They are: curricular insights; pedagogical insights; and community-building insights.

Curricular Insights

The Breakthrough curriculum is dense, presented in two 17-week courses, each of which includes an all-day Saturday event, and a Friday–Sunday weekend retreat. The curriculum includes both concepts to help men gain insight into their current state, and skills or tools that the men use to bring about growth and change. The curricular insights that could be most helpful to the domestic violence prevention community include the following:

Love instead of Shame

Breakthrough is fundamentally about men rediscovering their own goodness, and sense of self-worth. The Breakthrough curriculum is designed to help men re-connect with this goodness and rediscover their “inherent nature.” Respondents identified “inherent nature” as one of the three most important concepts that they learned through Breakthrough. Breakthrough is NOT designed to tear men down, demean them, or shame them for their previous mistakes and weaknesses.

Healing the Source of the Anger and Pain

Breakthrough is designed to help uncover the source of the pain and anger in men's life, and to ultimately, help men to heal this pain. While “anger management” is a component of the curriculum, it occurs in the context of the growing awareness about the source of their anger, and the deep healing that occurs through Breakthrough. Respondents identified “childhood trauma” and “carried feelings” as one of the three most important concepts that they learned from Breakthrough.

Using “Boundaries” to Understand and Express Feelings

Respondents identified “Boundaries” as one of the three most important concepts that they learned through Breakthrough. Breakthrough focuses on men developing a more complete, fully-human vocabulary of feeling, and helps men to develop the capacity to feel emotions in real time, and to understand their emotional world. The concept of “Boundaries” helps men to recognize their own feeling systems, and separate their feelings from those around them. Breakthrough does NOT just focus on managing anger, but on helping men to authentically experience a more full range of human emotion.

The Power of Learning to Truly Listen

“Active listening” was identified by the men as the single most important tool or skill that they acquired through Breakthrough. This means listening in a non-judgmental, supportive way, to truly affirm the other person's reality. Closely linked with the concept of “boundaries,” active

listening is an essential skill in helping men to become more effective communicators, and more capable of engaging in adult relationships.

Techniques to Discharge Frozen Feelings and Pain

Essential to the healing process that occurs through Breakthrough is the process of discharging the pain that has remained frozen deep in the psyche of men, and which gets triggered by real-time interaction, often resulting in violent or abusive outbursts. Discharging the early pain lessens the “charge,” and allows men to respond more appropriately to the actual situation. The ongoing “check-ins” and “sessions” serve an important role in providing a venue for men to continue the discharge process, and prevent experiences from “triggering” the pain and shame responses.

Power of Physical Touch and Nurturing

Breakthrough helps men to connect with each other, both emotionally and physically. This goes against strongly held societal norms, where physical touch and nurturing is restricted to either the bedroom or the sports field. Breakthrough helps men to recognize the deeply-rooted human need for physical touch and nurturing, and to appreciate the physical contact of other men in a way that is not clouded by sexual overtones.

Pedagogical Insights

The line between curriculum and pedagogy, like all content and process distinctions, is fuzzy. This is especially true with Breakthrough, where the course is not just the time to present the content (curriculum), but a space to model what the content looks like in practice (pedagogy). This is an important distinction for the domestic violence community to understand. Rather than seeing the 52-weeks as the time to present the mandated content, the course must be seen as the opportunity to help men experience a different way of being in the world—no small task.

For this reason, the pedagogy cannot be seen as of secondary importance; but rather, is integral to the successful achievement of the goals of the program. Among the pedagogical insights that the domestic violence community can learn from Breakthrough are the following:

The Power of “Sessioning” or “Listening Partnerships”

The respondents identified “small group sessioning” as the most important learning approach in terms of power and strength of impact. Roughly half of the 3 and ½ hour weekly meeting is devoted to this small group sessioning, now referred to as “listening partnerships.” Listening partnerships are perhaps the “core technology” of the transformation process. After the course is over, men are encouraged to continue these listening partnerships in the self-led groups, and with their on-going check-in partners. The listening partnerships enable men to actively use their listening and healing skills with each other, in an intimate and deeply personal venue where the healing process takes place. Transforming something as deeply held as the socialized male role requires this intimate, personal space.

The Power of Weekend Retreats and All-Day Meetings

Not only does this deep male re-socialization process require intimacy, it also requires sustained work that is not possible to accomplish in one evening meeting. Respondents identified the retreats and all-day events as the second most important learning approach. Clearly, while these

retreats and all-day events raise the barrier of entry into the program, their impact is powerful. The groups are able to accomplish much more significant work over the course of a long-day, or a 3-day retreat, while also building community and connections not possible at an evening meeting.

Teaching Team Allows for Small Group Work

The teaching team concept in Breakthrough is unique, as it includes not only the lead teacher, but additional men who have completed the program, and who now serve as “educators” and “allies.” These men lead the small group listening partnerships which are so essential to the success of the program. The presence of the educators/allies provides a teacher/participant ration of 3:1. This allows each participant to be intimately heard and supported by a man who has been through the program. It also helps to ensure that every person in the room gets equal time to share their issues and life stories. This emerged as a critical component in getting all men to buy-in to the process and invest themselves in the work.

Teaching Team as Role Models: Loving, Approachable, Fully Human and Fallible

In addition to making it possible for the small group work to take place, the educators/allies are important as role models of an alternative form of loving adult male behavior. This emphasizes that teachers or leaders of BIPs need more than just a technical knowledge of the material; but, that their real value is as loving men who can give their full attention and listen, and constantly remind men of their inherent goodness. The respondents identified the following key characteristics of the teaching team members:

- Modeling adult male loving behavior
- Being present, showing attention, great listeners
- Non-judgmental and compassionate
- Deep knowledge of the material
- Provide support for deep emotional work
- Intuitive sensitivity
- Approachable, human and fallible

The power of a group of men who have volunteered to support the growth of 25 other men is well-expressed in this quote:

Loving. All of these men put their lives on hold for hundreds of hours just to be there and help us!!! What adjectives do you put on that? See how loving all men can be. Accepting. Good Nature. Compassionate.

The Power of the Group for Mutual Support and Growth

The respondents powerfully expressed the important role that the other men in their course have played in facilitating each other's growth and development. The men in the class are clearly not just occupying chairs; but, they are actively sharing their truth, listening to each other, and providing the loving support that each person needs to work through this difficult journey. Important characteristics include:

- Ability to give and receive support and attention to each other

- Ability to be open and vulnerable with each other; non-judgmental and accepting
- Developing a trusting and safe environment
- Consistency and commitment to the process
- Recognizing common bonds, common issues, and common life stories

Community-Building Insights

There is a healthy debate within the Breakthrough leadership over whether Breakthrough is best described as a “program” (i.e., the Breakthrough I and II courses), or as a “community.” In reality, it is both. While the core functions have to do with recruitment for and the teaching of the two 17-week courses, the leadership recognizes the importance of building a community within which an alternative model of loving, male behavior can flourish. This resonates with the discussion within the domestic violence prevention field, recognizing the importance of taking a more community approach to the re-socialization process. There are a number of insights that can be drawn from the work of the Breakthrough Men's Community that specifically address the importance of creating a more all-encompassing community environment to support men's continued growth and development.

Community-building concepts within the program

The two 17-week programs (Breakthrough I and II) include a number of intentional dimensions and activities that are specifically designed to build a sense of community within the group. For example, each weekly session includes some group singing, which helps men contribute their individual voice to the voice of the group. The week-end retreat includes ample down time for men to be together. The highlight of the week-end is “creativity night” where each man is encouraged to share his unique talents with the group. Finally, men are encouraged to reach out to other men in the group for “check-ins” and other assignments, an additional way of building community within the group.

Self-led groups and Check-In Partners

While the core program ends with Breakthrough 2, men are encouraged to continue to meet in their small “self-led groups.” This is sometimes referred to as “Breakthrough 3,” though the name “self-led group” is more common within the community. The self-led group provides a framework for the men to continue their work and growth after the formal “graduation” from the Breakthrough program. Along with individual check-in partnerships, they provide an environment for the graduates to support each other in their work to build an alternative model of loving maleness.

Leadership Opportunities for Men

The teaching team approach provides a natural opportunity for leadership development for men in the BMC. 34% of the survey respondents had some experience working on the teaching teams, as either a teacher, educator, or ally. It is important to remember that all participants on the teaching teams are volunteers. The teaching teams receive extra training, and the opportunity to revisit over and over again, the content of the course. They also get the deep satisfaction of participating in the healthy growth and development of other men. The relationship between teaching teams and the program is highly reciprocal. The teaching teams give the program vibrancy and energy, and through their involvement in the program, the men and in turn receive the energy and gift of having contributed to the creation of a more loving and caring community.

Additional Community Activities

The BMC also sponsors events and activities throughout the year, designed to provide additional opportunities for learning, growth, and connection for the men. These include the annual 3-day summer retreat, occasional all-day workshops, and monthly “review of the basics” sessions led by the founder. In addition, BMC sends out a regular newsletter and e-mail announcement, with community highlights and upcoming events. The e-mail announcement also provides an opportunity for men to ask for specific support and services that they might need. These ancillary activities help men stay connected to the community after they complete the courses, and continue to play a role in each other's growth and development.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR BREAKTHROUGH IN THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PREVENTION FIELD

It is our sense that the Breakthrough Men's Community has much to offer the domestic violence prevention field. We have identified three specific opportunities for growth, that would integrate the BMC further into the domestic violence field. The opportunities are presented below in order of the ease of implementation.

Facilitate exchange of best practices with other community-healing focused approaches to working with men.

BMC is not the only organization that is actively developing a community-healing approach to men's transformation. There are other similar communities emerging, bringing together men from common cultural traditions. There are groups specifically working with African-American men, and other groups working with Latino men. We feel that much could be gained from bringing together these various community-healing focused men's groups, and encouraging the exchange of best practices and learning.

Integrate “mandated men” into current program format.

As the Breakthrough curriculum largely covers the content that AB 226 requires for all Batterer Intervention Programs, Breakthrough could readily go through the necessary steps to become an officially recognized BIP for the Monterey County region. This way, individual men who had an interest in the Breakthrough approach to healing and transformation could pursue Breakthrough as an alternative remediation strategy.

As indicated by the feedback of the men attending the focus groups, it would be important to find the right balance between “mandated” and “voluntary” men, so that the issues of one sub-set of the participants does not overwhelm, or dominate the group's learning. Furthermore, it would also be important to ensure that the confidentiality would not be compromised given the involvement of the probation department.

If Breakthrough moves in this direction, it would be important to revisit the content of the first few sessions, to ensure that the right atmosphere is created in the group, and that all members are given the chance to feel welcomed and to commit to the process, no matter if they are “mandated” or “voluntary” participants.

Re-work curriculum and develop a program specifically for “mandated men.”

A third alternative, and the one that would require the most time and work, would be to design a new Breakthrough-type course specifically for violent offenders. Ironically, this is where the essential developmental work for Breakthrough began in the 1980s, with “Men’s Alternatives to Violence,” which still exists in Monterey, and is one of the county’s approved BIPs. The Breakthrough curriculum would need to be revisited, and possibly, the section on anger would need to be enhanced.

There are some challenges to this alternative, most notably:

- *Cost:* the current fee of \$750 per 17-week course is prohibitive to most men who are mandated to attend a BIP.
- *Training and Support for Teaching Team:* there would need to be enhanced training and on-going support for the teaching team. Given the intensity of the issues, and the heightened resistance that violent offenders would bring to the process, it would be important to make sure that the teaching team had additional training to most effectively work with these issues. In addition, the teaching team would need on-going support so that they themselves would have the level energy, presence, and unconditional love that is required to support the men in their journeys.
- *Cultural Relevance:* Finally, it would be important to look at the curriculum and pedagogy from a multi-cultural perspective, to ensure that it is appropriate for this new community of men. To this point, participants in BMC have been largely white and upper-middle class. It would be important to work with diverse community members to review the program with a focus on its cultural relevance.

Chapter 8: Summary and Discussion: Breakthrough Organization Development

Breakthrough Organization Development

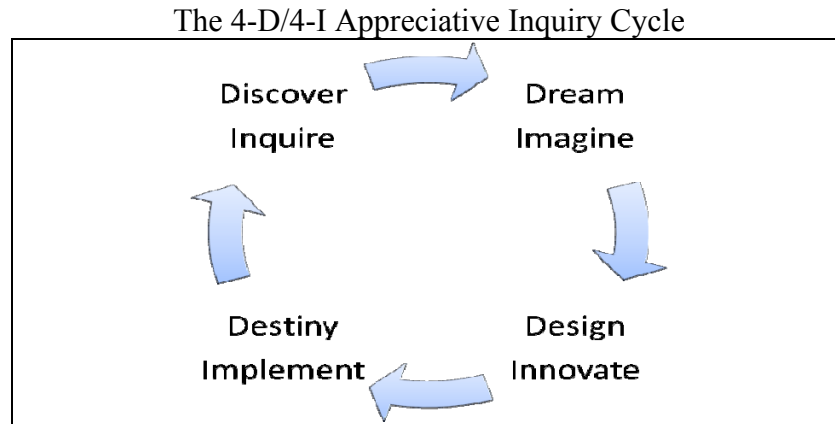
As part of the Blue Shield of California Foundation-sponsored effort to assess the potential for Breakthrough Men's Community (BMC) to contribute more broadly to the field of men's health, Fred Jealous convened a working group to discuss the findings of the survey of BMC members and begin considering what next steps might be taken to further develop the program. The working group was comprised of nine men, seven of whom are graduates of the BMC program. The following discussion presents the work of this group. First, the general organizational development process used by the group will be introduced. Second, the result of each of the steps of this process will be summarized. Finally, suggestions for next steps in BMC's organizational development process are presented.

BMC's Organizational Development Planning Process

The group employed an organizational development process known as Appreciative Inquiry (AI) to explore the future potential for BMC. This process, depicted in the graphic below, consists of four basic steps, known as either the 4 "D"s or the 4 "I"s. These four steps are:

- **Discover / Inquire:** In the first step of the AI process, participants engage in identifying the inherent strengths of their organization through a process of inquiry using such questions as, "What outcomes do we deliver most effectively?," "What methods that we use work best for achieving our goals?," and "What dimensions of our programs do our participants value the most?"
- **Dream / Imagine:** Informed and inspired by the strengths of their organization that they have identified through the inquiry process, participants move on in the second step of the AI process to envision the full, unique potential for their organization. This step is inherently creative, yet is not only aspirational because its grounding in the strengths of the organization assists participants in identifying goals and objectives for the organization that are inherently reflective of the capacities of the organization.
- **Design / Innovate:** In the third step of the AI process, participants move on to translate the identified goals and objectives of the organizations into a plan of action with specific activities identified to be completed in the short, medium and long terms and specific processes for monitoring progress on these activities and adjusting them to enable the organization to move toward its goals.
- **Destiny / Implement:** Finally, participants engage in realizing the plans that they have laid out for the development of their organization towards its long-term potential. In organizations that fully embrace the AI approach to organizational development, rather than being seen as a one-time event the AI approach is incorporated into the organization's operations as a regular process, thus the AI process feeds into itself in a

virtuous cycle of inquiry-imagination-innovation-implementation returning to inquiry, and so on.



Based on these principles, the working group oriented its discussion regarding BMC's further development with the following orienting questions:

- **What do the survey findings suggest are the key strengths of BMC? (Discovery)**
- **Where is potential long-term impact of BMC? Towards this goal, what can BMC be in 10 years? (Dream)**
- **What is the plan for BMC to realize these aspirations in ten years and beyond? What are the "next steps" to be taken by the BMC organizational development working group and BMC as a whole? What refinements or enhancements should be introduced into the design of BMC? (Design)**

The final step in the AI process – Destiny – will follow BMC's finalization of its design/implementation plans, which may entail some or all of the elements discussed in the next section.

Results of BMC's Organizational Development Planning

This section summarizes the outcome of the discussions of the working group, organized by the three steps of the AI process – Discovery, Dream and Design.

Discovery

What do the survey findings suggest are the key strengths of BMC?

While the working group participants identified a number of different strengths of the BMC program – from its effectiveness (“it change’s men’s lives”) to individual pedagogical mechanisms (“small group sessions are the key to BMC’s success”), for the purpose of considering the larger mandate of organizational development, the strengths of the program can be generalized into two categories – the curriculum and the community.

Curriculum. The curriculum is the collection of lessons imparted to members that each individual can incorporate into his life. In other words, curriculum is content addressing such

issues as self-esteem, boundaries, listening, the healing process, child development, inherent nature, differentiation of feelings, inner and adaptive child states, feeling management, sexuality, addictions, and so on. Curriculum also includes the pedagogical mechanisms, such as small group sessioning and the annual retreat, through which the content is delivered.

Community. While the growth of the men participating in BMC can be directly associated with the curriculum, it was suggested that the value of the content that men are taught through the various methodologies of the program could not be isolated from the unique relational environment through which this content is presented and that is continually recreated through the program. Essential to the BMC experience is the creation of a space where men can feel safe, heard and supported, where value is recognized in each individual and not dependent on performance, and where sharing of feelings is honored and encouraged. The centrality of community to BMC also extends beyond the context in which the curriculum is presented, the reformed community generated by BMC is also very much a critical product of BMC. That is, the potential impact of BMC is not simply to transform the lives of those men who are fortunate enough to participate in the program, but also and especially to transform society so that social expectations of men are healthier and thus the potential health of society at large can also improve.

Dream

Where is potential long-term impact of BMC? Towards this goal, what can BMC be in 10 years?

When asked what BMC might look like – who it might be serving and in what capacity – in 10 years, each working group participant identified that the program should expand, whether geographically, to other cities in the US, or demographically, to include a more diverse client population in terms of ethnicity, income level, age, sexual orientation, and/or specific target communities (such as churches, schools and universities, prisons, and social service agencies). Importantly, expansion of the BMC program was seen by the working group not only as an opportunity for the “organization” of BMC that can or cannot be seized upon but also and importantly as an obligation for BMC, which has an unique and necessary service to provide to men and their communities in terms of building vibrant and healthy communities.

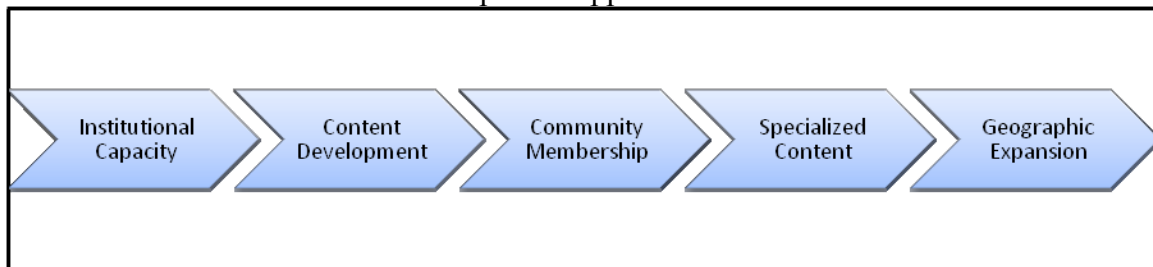
The working group, identified, however, that prior to focusing on the expansion of the program, considerable work needs to be done in building the institutional infrastructure of BMC, in terms of the operation of the program, the content of the program, and the maintenance of the more loosely organized, less formal and more social community among the men who have participated in BMC.

Each of these areas – operation, content and community – requires considerable strengthening. While there are a number of processes underway to address each of these components – from the employment of a full-time program administrator, to the refinement of the curriculum by Fred Jealous and efforts to improve training of curriculum presenters/educators/allies, to a semi-formal process considering how to better maintain the involvement of participants and graduates – each of this needs to be strengthened and institutionalized. The feeling was that only when these internal processes and training systems are in place can BMC realistically consider geographic expansion, say to a pilot program in San Diego.

A refined list of the four areas for further development for BMC that arose from these conversations is:

1. Develop BMC's institutional robustness so that it is capable of consistently operating at a high-quality level, with minimal risk of disruption due to human or financial resource constraints, and is capable of continuously improving its operations as an institution.
2. Develop and document the content of BMC, addressing both key strengths of the program – curriculum and community – in such a way that provides both an institutional guide for the current program's operation and materials for other communities to learn from and replicate components of BMC.
3. Expand the population of participants benefitting from the current BMC program through increased efforts to recruit from a broader population, potentially using innovative techniques for recruiting from specific population groups in particular (such as younger men, men of color, men from a more diverse set of geographic communities).
4. Expand the utilization of the BMC model through the development of curricula adapted to various target populations in conjunction with select partner organizations, such as schools/universities, churches, domestic violence programs, juvenile rehabilitation programs.
5. Test geographic expansion through the establishment of a BMC program in a very small number of other areas (1-2 most likely), such as Oakland, San Diego, Santa Cruz, or Seattle), in a way that generates additional learning regarding the potential replication of BMC in more communities.

Development Opportunities for BMC



Design

Institutional Capacity

The first and most critical step in BMC's development is the building of a more robust capacity for leadership of the organization. The BMC program is and continues to be the product of the work of Fred Jealous. All persons even somewhat familiar with BMC recognize and identify the essentiality of Fred's work on BMC in enabling it to continue operating. BMC is dependent on Fred – for guidance of its operations, for ongoing refinement and development of the program

contents, and even for support of its ethos. To borrow from the old marketing campaign of a financial services firm, “When Fred Jealous talks, the BMC community listens.”

BMC and all of its members and their communities benefit beyond any measure from Fred's continuing contribution to the program. The challenge for BMC is that it needs to mature as an institution so that it can be less reliant on Fred. This is simply a question of building additional capacity within BMC to complement Fred's contributions at a level that will eventually be able to fill the gap when Fred, for whatever reason, is no longer available to BMC at the level he has been.

This is not to suggest that BMC has not developed institutional capacity during its growth to date. But, the capacity that has been developed within BMC largely provides support to Fred that enables him to focus his efforts on those aspects of the program that he is uniquely capable of delivering, especially content development. This level of capacity has been essential to enabling BMC to continue its operations and to continue to refine and expand its programming. Yet, this institutional capacity has arguably been the minimum necessary to support BMC's basic operations and not enough to enable it to take that next “step” in its development.

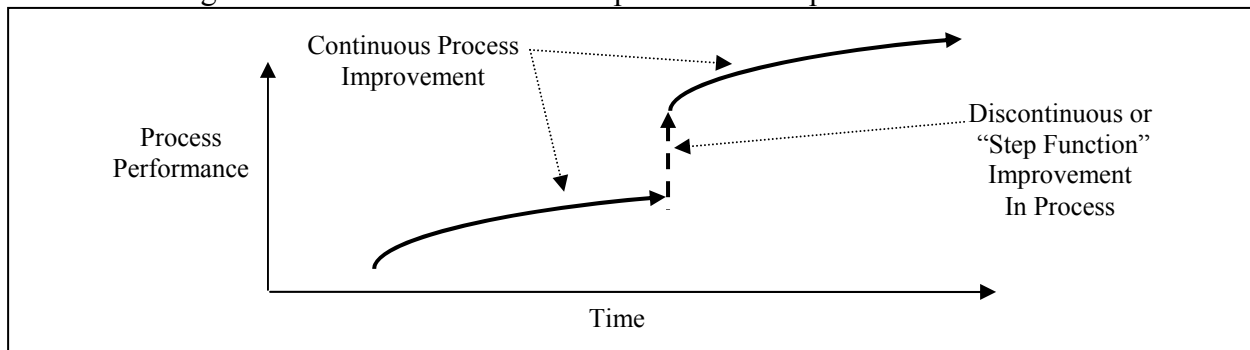
At this point, BMC needs to have more than one person working on the intellectual leadership of the program. BMC needs to have true partners with Fred involved in these efforts. In some ways, this is a form of legacy planning – a good practice of any well-run organization – to establish a bullpen of candidates to take over for senior leadership of the organization when turnover occurs. Yet, in another way it is even more important, not only because even before BMC needs to be concerned with replacing Fred, it needs to be concerned with providing Fred with a highly qualified intellectual partner, preferably partners, who can learn from him and his experience developing BMC. The type of knowledge that Fred can impart to a partner or partners is knowledge that will be difficult to transfer in the documentation of the BMC program, because it is not operational but generative – it is about learning not “what” Fred incorporates into the BMC program but “how” and “why” Fred incorporates this material. This type of learning can be shared in part through a more academic or theory-oriented text, but even this type of documentation that would not be directly usable by BMC, would not be adequate in capturing the second-level learning regarding BMC that Fred engages in on a regular basis.

As such, while BMC continues to identify different leadership roles for members of the community, individually or in groups – all of which is critically important – BMC also needs to invest considerably in identifying how to increase the capacity of the community to engage with Fred on an intellectual leadership level and not simply an operational level. This is especially important because BMC is at its core an intellectual innovation. Of course, referring to BMC as an intellectual innovation is not to deny its spiritual and moral elements, but even the incorporation of these elements in a coherent, appropriate and effective fashion is in large part made possible because of the intellectual framework underpinning the program.

This additional intellectual leadership for BMC does not necessarily need to take the form of a singular partner as discussed previously and could be developed within BMC similar to other group-based voluntary leadership efforts, such as the core leadership group and the groups working on training new content-delivery volunteers. However, it needs to be stressed that the

type of leadership that is necessary in this respect is different in kind from that being sought in other facets of the organization. In the space of intellectual leadership, Fred is largely recognized as without peer. While there is unquestionably considerable truth to this framing, as Fred is the mind behind BMC, it is critical to BMC's sustainability and even its ability to realize a "step function" in its development trajectory that other persons providing input to the organization's development be able to engage with Fred in substantive discussions and even debates and disagreements about the programming of BMC. In the spirit of BMC's inclusive operating style, efforts may be made to develop greater intellectual leadership within the community to enable members of the community to form a working group that will engage in these questions more substantively – but unless such a working group is made up of other professionally qualified and experienced individuals this approach is likely to take considerable time to develop sufficiently and even then is not likely to supplant completely the need for a more qualified person or persons to engage with Fred in BMC the intellectual leadership for BMC.

Diagram of a Discontinuous of "Step Function" Improvement in a Process



Of course, more distributed intellectual leadership is not the only capacity-development need for BMC. In addition, BMC also needs to consider increasing its operational capacity and its capacity for supporting its operations financially. The Board of Directors of BMC and others within BMC, however, recognize these other needs and are taking steps to address them. While this is not to suggest that they are being adequately addressed – it is advisable that greater effort be put into these efforts as a priority only second to identifying additional intellectual leadership and proceed even as a plan is being made to increase the group's intellectual leadership – the priority less identified and discussed up to this point, and which is in many ways more the critical capacity to be developed for BMC's short-term efficacy and long-term sustainability, is that of intellectual leadership.

Finally, a last component of institutional capacity that has been identified as being critical to BMC's effectiveness at a local level is the assurance of a physical home for BMC. The establishment of a physical space for BMC has, in fact, been identified as a critical factor to the community's making a discontinuous improvement in the effectiveness of the program's services to its members residing in the Monterey Peninsula. Thus, it is reasonable to consider that the maintenance of a physical home for BMC is an important goal of the organization, especially at the local level. This priority, however, should be recognized as a critical factor in the success of BMC as a local service program and not necessarily as a broader institution. As such, while the

identification of a plan to maintain a physical home, including the fundraising required for such an effort, should be a priority for BMC, this priority should be recognized as a local priority that is not necessarily essential to the long-term effectiveness of BMC as a replicable approach to promoting the health and wellness of men and communities in all communities.

Next Steps

- * Begin to identify means by which additional intellectual capacity can be developed within BMC or be brought into BMC in order to work closely with Fred in continuing the development of the BMC program and in particular to learn from Fred in order to begin to transfer more of Fred's deep knowledge of the field and the BMC approach to strengthen the sustainability of BMC.
- * Continue efforts to identify and address BMC's needs for additional professional capacity in its administration and management and other areas.
- * Identify a plan to maintain a physical home for BMC as a factor critical to the effectiveness of the program in the Monterey Peninsula region.

Content Development

Closely related to this question of intellectual leadership is the need for BMC to continue to develop its content but also and especially to deepen its understanding of how the content fits together as a system and to document this understanding.

The ongoing development and refinement of the content of BMC is a readily recognized priority for the organization. By content, this includes both the material that is presented to participants in the BMC program and how this material is presented to participants in the program and transmitted to participants to enable them to practice it outside of the program. Going one step further, however, BMC needs to place substantial emphasis on documenting this material in detail and especially the understanding of how this material works to address the issues covered.

To date, BMC and primarily Fred have already been engaged in an ongoing effort to develop a manual for BMC. This is an essential task for BMC that has appropriately been given considerable attention, and BMC should continue to prioritize the development of basic "how-to" materials. An important complement to this work, however, needs to also be the development of materials that convey the deeper thinking that undergirds the basic program manual.

One especially important question about the content of Breakthrough and its further development is how BMC can and should be framed as an opportunity for men's personal development. BMC could be framed in any number of ways but two different framings seem to be most common today, suggesting that the two can co-exist but also potentially identifying a question whose

resolution could significantly effect BMC's future trajectory. These framings are BMC as a "therapeutic" or "recovery" process (useful for coping with and healing from various types of abuse, whether as a victim, as an abuser, or both), and alternatively as a program for personal growth and development. The question of how BMC is framed is not simply one of how BMC portrays itself to external audiences but instead is critical to how BMC might define who are its intended participants and what it wishes to offer to them. As such, BMC should consider investing a fair amount of time in resolving this question, whose answer is critical to all of the following steps in designing and implementing its plans.

There are several ways that BMC could effectively document this deeper understanding behind the BMC program, and two in particular stand out. First, as discussed previously, one way of capturing this material and especially the theory and understanding behind it is in the writing of more technical documents, such as academic-style counseling or psychology texts about the entire program as a whole or in a series of smaller pieces on components of the program. This undertaking would be particularly helpful in institutionalizing the deeper knowledge about the program for other practitioners, especially intellectual leaders, within the BMC as well as from other communities. Another means of capturing this material would be the writing of a more mass market-oriented book about the program, capturing both its history and its current practice. These two efforts should not be seen as competitive with one another or with the development of the more basic practitioner's manual, but rather as mutually supportive and reinforcing. The development of each one of these documentation efforts will help the others. In particular, the writing of the more technical documents will likely help to make the manual even more effective, and both of these will move forward the development of a more popularly oriented story.

The ability of BMC to continue to develop its content, especially to achieve a "step function," however, is also very dependent on BMC being able to increase its leadership capacity both to free Fred from more operational duties to allow him to focus his energies on this work, which he can uniquely do, and to begin to establish the infrastructure for this work to continue to be refined beyond Fred's tenure.

Next Steps

- * Continue developing the BMC curriculum and documenting the program as a "how to" manual for practitioners.
- * Carefully consider what the purpose of BMC is – a quasi-therapeutic recovery process or a personal growth and development.
- * Begin to develop more technical documentation of the theory and deeper thinking that informs the curriculum, in terms of both the content and its delivery.
- * Begin to develop a more popular elaboration of the BMC approach that can popularize the program and its purpose and introduce its lessons and benefits to the broader public.

Community Membership

The diversity of BMC's membership and its reach to other populations than have traditionally benefitted from the program is an important issue and one that the members of the community themselves are particularly interested in. The members and leaders of BMC recognize increasing the reach of the program to as of yet served communities as an important goal for BMC. For this reason, BMC should give this effort considerable attention. However, it should also be recognized that this step in BMC's development and the other steps that follow, specialized content and geographic expansion, represent optional, albeit potentially obligatory, expansions of the program rather than necessary steps that the program needs to take to ensure its basic sustainability. This is not to suggest that expanding the BMC to include more men from populations that have not traditionally been represented in the program is not an important next step for BMC's development to fulfill its potential. This recognition is important rather to clearly identify the critical nature of the prior two steps – institutional capacity development and content development and documentation.

In specific regard to how it might go about achieving this goal of expanding the reach of its program, BMC should bear in mind the adage, “begin how you would like to end,” or more completely, “begin with efforts that look like what you would like the results of those efforts to look like.” In other words, if BMC is interested in having its services reach different segments of the communities in which it already operates, a first step in these efforts should be to identify and invite individuals from these segments of the community to participate in the planning of these efforts from an early stage. As one means of incorporating these individuals into the process, BMC could form a working group tasked with addressing this issue in particular and consisting of both BMC members and these other representative individuals. As a matter of course in doing this, BMC should attempt to compose such a working group of a meaningful proportion of representatives from the target audiences so as to give them a substantial sense of ownership in the process rather than have them participate as less-than-equal contributors in the discussion. For similar reasons, BMC should also be conscientious of recognizing the expertise and authority of these participants on the topic of men's health and community wellness even if they have not been participants in BMC programs. Beyond this recommendation as to the process through which BMC should start to plan more deliberately about increasing its reach to non-traditional participants, BMC might hold off on other efforts to address the factors believed to inhibit these other populations' participation in BMC. BMC's understanding of these factors is still cursory and it may be better-served to develop a better understanding of these factors before pursuing solutions that might not be effective (for example, cost may be a factor in discouraging certain populations from participating, but perhaps a stronger impediment is actually in the content. If this is the case, efforts put into raising money to lower the costs to participants might consume energy of BMC that could be more effectively trained on adjustments to the curriculum.) It may be advisable for BMC, then, to wait to have its initiatives to address these issue evolve from the working group in a way that most engages the representatives from these communities in identifying not only the impediments but also in identifying and possibly taking at least partial ownership in realizing potential solutions to these impediments.

Next Step

* Form a working group on incorporation, composed of BMC members and non-BMC representatives of those various populations that BMC sees it desiring wanting to offer its services, whether racial/ethnic, income level, age level, etc.

Specialized Content

Related to both of the previous steps, the development of specialized content represents an opportunity for BMC to both potentially broaden its service to other communities that it does not yet reach and to further develop and document its curriculum. As such, this step does not necessarily have to follow that previously discussed, community membership, but could proceed in parallel. In fact, the development of specialized content could be seen as an alternative or complementary approach to broadening BMC's reach through the incorporation of participants not traditionally represented in the program's membership. Similarly, the development of specialized content could also be seen as an alternative or complementary approach to BMC expanding geographically, as specialized content could be provided to service delivery providers in various geographic areas in lieu of the development of full BMC programs in these areas.

BMC could pursue this next step in two different ways – opportunistically or proactively. These two approaches, however, are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and to the contrary it is suggested that at least initially, BMC should focus on the former, while later in its development it emphasize the latter. Early on, rather than take its focus off its efforts to solidify its standard curriculum and model, BMC should focus on developing specialized content “opportunistically” in response to requests by particular partners. Doing this will allow BMC to take advantage of the most promising opportunities to push the frontiers of the development of its content in a way that it is likely to be more effective in its actual application because of the desire of the requesting partner. This opportunistic development will also let BMC learn from its environment as to what types of specialized content for which there might be broader demand. At a later stage, BMC might begin instead to focus on the development of specialized content for particular markets – such as churches, schools, prisons, and domestic violence programs – as informed by its opportunistic work in its earlier stages. At this later stage, BMC should have the increased capacity that would allow it to make this more proactive development of specialized content without imposing a substantive burden.

Next Steps

* In the short term, BMC should focus on the opportunistic development of specialized content for particular organizations in response to requests.

* In the longer term, BMC may shift its focus to more proactively developing specialized content to market to particular classes of consumers, such as churches, schools, and domestic violence programs.

Geographic Expansion

Finally, geographic expansion of BMC is identified by its members and leaders as a highly desired, critical goal for the further development of the program. The promise and immediate benefits generated for participants in BMC and their communities are so important that they should not be limited to only a single community. There is too much need and too much promise in BMC. However, the enthusiasm for geographic expansion of BMC should be tempered by the tremendous need for the benefits of BMC to be extended to other communities within the same geographic area, as discussed previously, and for developing the robustness of the BMC program in order to ensure its ability to continue to do its important work as long as it is needed.

As such, geographic expansion is the last development opportunity that BMC should pursue and only after considerable progress has been made in meeting the more definitive goals of developing the organization's institutional capacity and adequately capturing its content. If BMC attempts to expand geographically before adequately establishing its institutional integrity and sustainability, such attempts are likely to detract from the more necessary work of solidifying the existing program and thus threaten the very structure upon which BMC is based.

Additionally, when BMC does look to expand geographically, it is recommended that it carefully consider promoting the broader availability of its programs through the dissemination of its content through other like-minded organizations rather than necessarily through the establishment of new BMC programs. This form of network-based delivery of mission-oriented services is increasingly being recognized in various forums as being a more promising means of realizing the goals of programs like BMC largely because it keeps the focus of the work on the mission rather than on operational demands. This type of effort could be realized largely as a product of the previously discussed documentation of BMC content. Once this content is documented and distilled, BMC could pursue a number of activities to generate such an effort, from organizing conferences for introducing other programs to the BMC pedagogy, the establishment of a loosely organized and self-organizing network of organizations with similar missions that ascribe to certain principles distilled from the BMC program, a more-formal accreditation process for certifying other programs as meeting certain standards of the BMC program, and training of content-delivery staff of similar programs (potentially leading to a professional certification). The design of these opportunities are all at least several years off and must be preceded by considerable work in institutionalizing BMC in its current formulation, but the idea behind these opportunities is one that BMC should consider carefully – the expansion of the benefits of BMC to other geographic communities may arise less through the replication of the BMC organization as much as through the dissemination of the program's vision, mission, principles and pedagogy.

Next Steps

* BMC should consciously establish an organizational expectation that geographic expansion, while exciting and highly desirable as a means of diffusing the benefits of the program, is a secondary priority that will be held back on until the program has developed sufficient

organizationally capacity, particularly intellectual capacity, and has refined and documented its content in various degrees of technical detail for different key audiences.

* When BMC does begin to plan for its geographic expansion, it should consider various models that would allow it expand its impact geographically to the greatest extent possible, which might not entail expansion of its operations. Examples of the types of models it might consider include the development of a network of BMC-like organizations, BMC certification of qualified programs using BMC content, BMC training institute for professionals in the men's health and community health fields.

Destiny – Next Steps for Implementing an Organizational Development Plan

Looking ahead to implementing a plan for the further development of BMC, many of the next steps are already outlined in the outcome of the discussion of the Design/Innovate deliberations of the organizational development working group. Beyond these particular steps, however, there are some very process-oriented questions for BMC to address.

First, BMC needs to identify a champion for leading any organizational development process. This champion could be an individual leader, but it is likely that a group of BMC members tasked as an organizational development working group would best fit the culture of BMC and be able to share responsibility for motivating the members of BMC to embrace and contribute to the realization of this process. Once such a champion is identified, it would be that individual's or that group's responsibility to finalize recommendations on the organizational development process and present these to BMC's Board of Directors for authority to act upon them on behalf of BMC. The BMC Board could also grant authority to such a working group to act on the Board's behalf within a specific set of parameters.

Second, the first task for the BMC organizational development champion would be not only recommendation of the steps to be taken to develop BMC further but also the identification of an appropriate workplan/timeline for implementing each of the next steps contained in the development plan. The development of such a workplan is beyond the scope of this report as it would entail considerable discussion of the availability of resources, both human and financial, and the prioritization of such resources to implement each of the efforts outlined in the plan. Along with providing an idea as to when BMC might be able to enjoy the fruits of the organizational development process, a workplan also serves as a monitoring tool to consider how well BMC is progressing in addressing the various components.

Finally, as a means of concluding these recommendations for further developing BMC, the various elements of the design process can be framed together to serve as an outline of the various next steps, in order of relative priority, for BMC to take in its journey to support men in living healthy and full lives and in supporting the same for their communities.

Next Steps for BMC's Organizational Development

Institutional Capacity

- * Begin to identify means by which additional intellectual capacity can be developed within BMC or be brought into BMC in order to work closely with Fred in continuing the development of the BMC program and in particular to learn from Fred in order to begin to transfer more of Fred's deep knowledge of the field and the BMC approach to strengthen the sustainability of BMC.
- * Continue efforts to identify and address BMC's needs for additional professional capacity in its administration and management and other areas.
- * Identify a plan to maintain a physical home for BMC as a factor critical to the effectiveness of the program in the Monterey Peninsula region.

Curriculum Development

- * Continue developing the BMC curriculum and documenting the program as a "how to" manual for practitioners.
- * Carefully consider what the purpose of BMC is – a quasi-therapeutic recovery process or a personal growth and development.
- * Begin to develop more technical documentation of the theory and deeper thinking that informs the curriculum, in terms of both the content and its delivery.
- * Begin to develop a more popular elaboration of the BMC approach that can popularize the program and its purpose and introduce its lessons and benefits to the broader public.

Community Membership

- * Form a working group on incorporation, composed of BMC members and non-BMC representatives of those various populations that BMC sees it desiring wanting to offer its services, whether racial/ethnic, income level, age level, etc.

Specialized Content

- * In the short term, BMC should focus on the opportunistic development of specialized content for particular organizations in response to requests.

* In the longer term, BMC may shift its focus to more proactively developing specialized content to market to particular classes of consumers, such as churches, schools, and domestic violence programs.

Geographic Expansion

* BMC should consciously establish an organizational expectation that geographic expansion, while exciting and highly desirable as a means of diffusing the benefits of the program, is a secondary priority that will be held back on until the program has developed sufficient organizational capacity, particularly intellectual capacity, and has refined and documented its content in various degrees of technical detail for different key audiences.

* When BMC does begin to plan for its geographic expansion, it should consider various models that would allow it expand its impact geographically to the greatest extent possible, which might not entail expansion of its operations. Examples of the types of models it might consider include the development of a network of BMC-like organizations, BMC certification of qualified programs using BMC content, BMC training institute for professionals in the men's health and community health fields.

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The richness and depth of our data owe much to the 164 respondents who answered the written survey questions with such moving honesty and thoroughness. The focus group interviewees were especially generous in responding to our follow-up questions with thoughtful and frank incisiveness.

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We are extremely grateful to Lee Garland, Martin Donald and Rebecca Cheney for their careful and patient work in helping with the editing and formatting of this report. Any remaining errors or inconsistencies are, of course, ours; without their contribution, there would be many more such blemishes.

Finally, we wish to acknowledge the unswerving support and encouragement of Naomi Pollack and Kathleen Kitch, who without complaint provided the abundance of love and quesadillas necessary to sustain our efforts over the last two years.

Appendix I

Glossary of Terms

The following definitions are taken fairly directly from the handouts and teaching team handbooks for the Breakthrough 1 and 2 workshops. Any inaccuracies are, however, the responsibility of the authors.

ABUSE OF CHILDREN

The mistreatment of children takes several forms – physical, sexual, economic and emotional. The most insidious and common form is emotional abuse, the systematic diminishment of a child through repeated belittling and humiliation or through the withholding of affection and support.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Taking complete responsibility for the reality (thinking, feeling, deciding, acting) we create, regardless of how others are acting or feeling.

ADAPTED CHILD

This is the survivor of a dysfunctional family system who became preoccupied with protecting his little boy (see below) from more pain and shame and developed various defensive mechanisms. As a result, the adapted child is usually too guarded to go through the healing process and must be re-parented (see below) for recovery to be successful.

ADAPTED CHILD REALITY

This reality is created as a necessary defense mechanism against child abuse. It is characterized by defensiveness, hyper-vigilance, non-trusting, control, and manipulation. These reactions, often vital to survival in childhood, are out-dated for the adult. When in this reality, a person will expect the present to resemble past hurts and will become defensive.

ADDICTION

Addictions are a way of coping with pain. As the pain from child abuse was never allowed to heal, adults use drugs, alcohol, sex, food, work and so forth in order to cope with their suffering. The Addiction Cycle means that such adults will perpetrate the abuse on their own children and cause the addictive behaviors to continue into the next generation (see Shame below).

ADULT REALITY

This state is characterized by grounded, clear-thinking, flexible, non-reactive, present-time reality. In this state, the individual has an appropriate measure of self-esteem, generated from within.

AFFIRMATIONS

Affirmations are positive statements about oneself, stressing a specific aspect of one's inherent nature and contradicting the message of childhood traumas. The statements, which contain the individual's name (as in "I, (name), am good enough as I am") are written down multiple times and/or recorded and spoken aloud or played back as often as possible.

BOUNDARIES

Boundaries are a concept and set of tools which enable one to bring more respect and control to one's own reality. Boundaries permit the fully functional adults to recognize and protect all aspects of their reality. These aspects include the physical (issues of distance and touch), emotional, intellectual, sexual, and spiritual. Setting boundaries with another person enables one to avoid being either an offender (by intruding on their reality) or a victim (failing to protect one's own reality). Using boundaries as a container also enables each individual to recognize and affirm what is true for them, when, for example, listening and sharing in a session (see below).

CARRIED FEELINGS

See Feeling States below.

CHILD REALITY

This reality is characterized by intense feelings, often of being unprotected, small, and dangerously vulnerable. Adults who act on this state will tend to act like a child and to look outside themselves for the parenting they did not receive.

CODEPENDENCY

This is the painful pattern of depending on others in an attempt to find safety, self-worth and identity. It is a disease caused by child abuse and recovery involves healing those early hurts, leading to enhanced self-esteem and eliminating the need to blame or control and manipulate others.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Breakthrough's goal in terms of communication is for participants to strengthen their ability to function in present time adult reality, so that they can listen to themselves, share themselves, and listen to others in clear, direct, respectful, moderate, and empathetic ways.

CONFIDENTIALITY

This is defined in Breakthrough by all participants and teaching team members making the following statement: "I agree to keep what I see and hear in this workshop and related activities confidential in and outside the group."

CONTRADICTION

This is seen in behaviors (verbal and non-verbal) and attitudes which help participants remember what is true and which directly challenge past abuses (both overt and covert) and pseudo-realities. Old behaviors and thinking are contradicted in order to make room for the new.

COPING PROCESS

This process involves the blockage of the healing process after one has been hurt. The damage is thus internalized, causing the accumulation of distress and the seeking of relief in addictions (see above). Breakthrough contrasts the coping process with the healing process, or recovery.

CORE ISSUES

This is the small set of common issues that underlie distress patterns which result from very early

hurts and pseudo-realities. These issues include fear of abandonment, fear of not being enough, and fear of being unlovable.

DISCHARGE

Discharge is the physical releasing of feelings around old, unhealed hurts. It is manifested by such behaviors as laughing, weeping, raging, shaking, or perspiring.

DISTRESS

Distress covers the variety of uncomfortable feeling states and pseudo-realities which routinely persist until old hurts are healed. Because these states persist or regularly recur, they are also known as DISTRESS PATTERNS, which can confuse adults and make it difficult to perceive what is true.

FEELINGS

Feelings tell us how life experiences impact adults. Old, unhealed feelings (of fear, for example, or anger or shame) are experienced as intense, overwhelming, or false (pseudo) realities and must be healed. Present time feelings are moderate. Feelings are not permanent.

FEELING STATES

Breakthrough teaches participants to distinguish among five feeling states: *adult feeling states* are in present time, are generally relaxed and allow clear thinking and the perception of reality; *child feeling states* derive from the past, are intense, and often involve feeling small and vulnerable; *adapted-child feeling states* are developed as an adaptation to repeated trauma and involve rapid defensive or protective responses to perceived threats; *carried feeling states* are the distressed emotional states of people who were overwhelmed and traumatized as children, thus featuring overwhelming feelings of hopelessness and worthlessness; and *boundary failure feeling states*, which arise when boundaries are not used and the feelings of others are taken in.

HEALING PROCESS

Recovery from child abuse and the resultant codependency centrally involves discharging feelings carried from childhood and ending the suffering from unhealed hurts. This leads to reclaiming self-esteem, developing boundaries, identifying our own needs, acting in moderation, and sharing one's reality appropriately. The healing process is contrasted with the coping process (see above).

HEALTHY SHAME

In the fully functional adult, shame is experienced as a mild form of embarrassment, from which one can readily apologize for disrespectful or offensive behavior, without losing touch with one's own self-esteem. Having a healthy level of self-esteem, in other words, enables one to experience healthy shame and be open to the impact of one's behavior on others.

INNER CHILD

Also known as the Precious Child or the Little Boy, this is the natural, vulnerable youngster in the years before repeated trauma causes the emergence of the protective adapted child (see above), who then cuts off the Inner Child from the healing process. The functional adult re-integrates with the inner child by affirming and nurturing him, validating the pain, anger and

shame resulting from child abuse, and discharging those feelings in order to heal the old hurts.

INHERENT NATURE

In Breakthrough, one's inherent nature is what is true and real of a fully human male. These qualities can never be taken a way from an individual and are the foundation for creating the life one really wants.

INTEGRITY

This is the continuous commitment to remaining open, honest, direct, and willing to change.

HEALING RELATIONSHIP

Central to the Breakthrough process, this is the means for reclaiming what is true about participants as fully human males (see Inherent Nature). It involves the listening and sharing skills learned in the workshops and results in unique relationships.

LISTENING

This is a central skill in recovery, best defined by what is *not* involved. In attentive listening, there are no judgments, opinions, critiques, advice, comments, or interruptions. By combining listening with relaxed breathing techniques, the listener behaves in a warm, friendly, and committed fashion, truly hearing and thus getting to know his interlocutor.

MUTUALITY

This is closely connected with the Healing Relationship in that it connotes a relationship of shared power and mutual respect and caring. This characteristic is achieved through a dynamic, open-ended, empowering process, so structured that each participant contributes and derives benefit in a balanced and mutually refreshing manner.

PAST-TIME REALITY

This concept represents the events that have already taken place in the life of adult participants. When old hurts are not healed, this reality may be confused with present-time reality.

PERSON

In Breakthrough, the notion of person is based in an individual's inherent nature (see above) as a fully human male. The program therefore involves a literal change into "a new person," throwing off old behaviors, attitudes, and pseudo-realities and uncovering the real man underneath.

PRESENT-TIME REALITY

This is the current moment, right now; the place a man has reached in his own individual evolution.

PSEUDO-REALITY

In contrast to Inherent Nature (see above), pseudo-reality is a false condition, created by unhealed hurts and seen in the resulting distress, where the individual sees himself as unlovable, unattractive, weak, stupid, incapable, or unsafe.

REALITY

Reality is that which is permanently true and cannot be successfully contradicted, denied or cancelled.

REMEMBERING

In Breakthrough, this is a slow, gentle process where the focus stays on strengthening each man's knowledge of his Inherent Nature (see above). Remembering, in this sense, strengthens one's ability to be more decisive.

RE-PARENTING

As part of his recovery and healing, the functional adult must make contact with the adapted child (see above), understand his attitudes and behaviors and then provide the affirmation and leadership to help him let go of his fears and guarded, defensive posture so that healing and re-integration may occur.

RESTIMULATION

This is the process whereby an event in the present reminds someone of past-time occurrences or situations from which he has not yet fully healed. This leads to distorting present-time reality (see above) and treating it as past-time reality (see above), often with intense feelings.

SELF-AFFIRMATION

This is the capacity to affirm one's reality and one's needs (both from oneself and from others). Self-affirmation includes being honest and taking full responsibility for the difficulties we are experiencing.

SELF-ESTEEM

Self-esteem is the continuous positive self-regard which permits a solid, consistent knowledge of one's own value. In the Breakthrough version, it is emphasized that self-esteem has nothing to do with feelings: anyone can know their own value no matter how they are feeling. In other words, self-esteem remains completely intact beneath all one's confused feelings.

SESSION

This is a signature Breakthrough event, involving the healing relationship of mutuality between two men. Specific time (an equal portion for each man) is allotted for receiving attention from the other while expressing issues and feelings, followed by feedback on what was helpful and what could be even better.

SHAME

Everyone experiences shame during childhood. It brings attention to one's fallibility and plays a role in the development of morality and spirituality (see Healthy Shame, above). Excessive shame, however, is debilitating and blocks psychological development. All children should be told that they are worthy, precious, and lovable. When parents lack adequate self-esteem, however, they reinforce the child's imperfections through various abusive behaviors and produce a core of shame in the child. This shame core is the foundation for adult codependency and, if not interrupted, guarantees that the cycle of abuse will continue into the next generation.

SPIRITUALITY

The basis for spirituality is the integrated functioning of an individual's physical, emotional, intellectual, and sexual realities. As one flows, comfortably and moderately, through awareness and expressions of these aspects of our reality, one experiences wholeness and a connection to life and to all of creation.

Appendix II Breakthrough Board Retreat Notes

Breakthrough Board Retreat

BRAINSTORMING : What do you want to learn from the Blue Shield "Implications and Lessons Learned Study?"

1. How amenable is BT to a wider audience?
2. How effective is the BMC model in reducing abuse (verbal, emotional, physical, sexual)? How has BT affected those who have come to the program as abusers? If BT has had an impact by reducing or eliminating abusive and addictive behaviors, how long does it take to have this impact? Is there recidivism? If so, what is the rate? How does change occur over time?
3. What are future potential funding possibilities for BT?
4. How does the BMC continue to be independent while working effectively with a larger organization? Can the BMC make a contribution without being subsumed in another entity?
5. It will be valuable to get an objective, third-party appraisal of the effectiveness of BT.
6. How can the BMC work with other organizations to expand its work beyond the Monterey Peninsula? Beyond Monterey County?
7. What BT could do better and how?
8. Can the BMC model work in an environment of mandated attendance?
9. How well does BT do in the area of communication skills?
10. How does BT fit into studies of other, comparable groups and programs?
11. How big an impact has BT had thus far on domestic violence?
12. What statistical evidence is there to document the effectiveness of BT?
13. In what areas could the Board of BT provide more useful and effective direction?
14. As BT develops, should we create aspects of future programs directed specifically at domestic violence issues?
15. The importance of the "hidden" parts of the curriculum: for example, the educators and allies showing up for the men.
16. What potential, if any, there is for a book about the BMC and its impact.
17. How BT fits into a medical model (for BIPs).
18. About the relationship between physical abuse populations and BT as an educational model that addresses broader issues.
19. What are those men not involved not involved?
20. The impact of learning about diversity.
21. What has been the impact of BT on the life of graduates - their relationships, their work, their parenting, their partnering.
22. How much are BT men still engaging in behaviours like minimization and numbing?
23. What has been the impact on men who went through the program but then left the community?

Breakthrough Board Retreat

BRAINSTORMING : What Breakthrough graduates could do better

1. Attend BT 3 (self-led small groups) meetings. Keep attending workshops.
2. Communicate with the larger group; update address, phone numbers, etc.
3. Continue work, self-care.
4. Stay connected: including literally, keeping BT and cohort peers informed of changes of address and phone number.
5. Follow their dreams.
6. Maintain a healthy and balanced life, including BT.
7. Take on leadership challenges, both in BT and beyond. Take more initiative in on-going support groups.
8. Think outside the BMC; expand their vision.
9. Be more pro-active in seeking help.
10. Take more risks with regard to their fears.
11. Learn to communicate better with their partner; bring about positive changes in relationships.
12. Take risks by trusting more.
13. Welcome conflict and anger as opportunities.
14. Challenge isolation patterns; challenge fear and feelings of being small; challenge the old roles.
15. Challenge feelings of neediness with regard to women.
16. Take risks with regard to their attachment to the male role for the purposes of keeping safe.
17. Challenge love and sex addiction.
18. Individually expand their principles to an increasingly larger community, thus going after various "-isms" in the world.
19. Taking ownership of decisions in their life.
20. Breaking patterns of co-dependency.
21. Act based on the power of their love.
22. Be more financially generous with BMC.
23. Respond better to BMC communications.

Breakthrough Board Retreat
BRAINSTORMING : What Breakthrough graduates do well

1. They know how to listen.
2. They know how to have and maintain effective boundaries.
3. They keep "dramatics" to a minimum.
4. They have free attention outside themselves.
5. They think well of others: they apply the concept of inherent nature.
6. They act on their dreams, on what makes their heart sing.
7. They support one another.
8. They are demonstrative with each other: they show their love.
9. They know how to get support; they ask for help.
10. They show affection.
11. They separate their own self from that of others.
12. They know how to appreciate their relationships and feelings.
13. They challenge old judgemental habits.
14. They are accountable (with help).
15. They understand abusive behavior.
16. They know the difference between anger and abuse.
17. They show and receive love more freely.
18. They are more vulnerable.
19. They are able to have and express their feelings in a healthy way.
20. They are willing to give back to the community.
21. They have consistent expectations in terms of relationships with other BT men, how sessions work and so forth.
22. They understand and engage in moderation in all things.
23. They express their needs.
24. They do not engage in discrimination; they are inclusive.
25. No substance abuse.
26. They can separate the past and the present.
27. They do well at parenting.
28. They understand the power of their history.
29. They understand the relationship between sexual fantasy and early hurts.
30. They separate the self from their feelings.
31. They engage in open and honest communication.
32. They have more and better relationships.
33. They are confident and human at work.
34. They have better self-esteem: they know their own worth.
35. They are reflective.
36. They have more awareness and space around their distress.
37. They continue to develop adult responses, compassion and empathy.

Breakthrough Board Retreat

BRAINSTORMING : What the Breakthrough Men's Community could do better

1. Train teachers and the teaching staff (allies, educators).
2. Connect with women through activities for both.
3. Reach out for help, support within the community.
4. Volunteer more, contradict isolation (beyond being allies, educators).
5. Placing more trust in our whole humanity.
6. Take more risks and abandon the male role.
7. Engage in more activities together.
8. Recognize our diversity and respect.
9. Spread the word in the wider community.
10. Increase participation in BT 3 (RTB); provide more financial support for the community.
11. Increase inclusiveness (reach out to minorities).
12. Have better communication with educators and allies on their roles and tasks.
13. Develop more leaders.
14. Find stable funding sources.
15. Be consistent in finding permanent locations for workshops.
16. Moving to the center.
17. Creating better connections with and involvement in the wider community.
18. Be more visible.
19. Create more partnerships (organisations, cultural/ethnic groups, businesses).
20. Make better use of human resources (volunteers, etc).
21. More work with diversity issues.
22. Communicate alternatives to the performance model for men.
23. Raise money.
24. Find better ways to introduce the program to more men.
25. Widen our reach.
26. Reach out to adjacent cities and communities.

Breakthrough Board Retreat

BRAINSTORMING : What the Breakthrough Community does well

1. Actively challenge self-hatred; support more than compete. Provide communal re-parenting.
2. Give good attention; listen well.
3. Deconstruct the male role; identify and oppose false internalized societal values.
4. Heal old hurts.
5. Focus on inherent nature.
6. Facilitate meaningful connections among men.
7. Provide a good 34-week educational program.
8. Provide and encourage multiple levels of involvement.
9. Create a safe container (an expansive loving space).
10. Teaches good boundaries.
11. Teaches men how to relate to others as human beings; contradicts typical male behaviors.
12. Provides ongoing support through self-led groups (BT III).
13. Expands consciousness, broadens perspectives.
14. Educates men about and contradicts "-isms."
15. Gets out its message.
16. Helps men to discover their wants and needs (and the differences between the two).
17. Helps men discover their "spirituality."
18. Teaching men to respect others and themselves.
19. Develop a common philosophy of ways of being.
20. Men reach out to each other.
21. Men give each other honest feedback.
22. BT graduates give back to the community.
23. Organize men.
24. Give men a model for healing that works.
25. Men manifest themselves effortlessly outside the traditional male role.
26. Bringing every man to the center.
27. Sustain a container of inclusion.
28. Use "community" as the core of any and all teaching.
29. Ask for help as a community - bring in outside resources.
30. Organize and execute events effectively.
31. Sustain a welcoming environment.
32. The pacing of our development is organic.
33. Consider the "personal" as part of the organization.
34. Co-operate.
35. Provide stability for BT participants.
36. Attract volunteers to the teaching program.

Breakthrough NCBI Workshop

BRAINSTORMING : What Breakthrough does well and could do better in terms of diversity

In the spring of 2006, two local trainers with the National Coalition Building Institute gave a one-day leadership workshop for Breakthrough teachers, educators and Board members. The workshop closed with a group brainstorm of two lists: what Breakthrough currently does well in terms of diversity and what could be done better. These are the lists:

DO WELL:

1. Helping men to feel that they matter.
2. Paying close attention to welcoming diversity; contradicting "-isms."
3. Helping men to care for each other.
4. Noticing and tracking every man.
5. Embracing the long term.
6. Recognising that equal time = equal participation.
7. Viewing the concept of "community" as contradicting isolation.
8. No judging or fixing; providing a safe place to do the work.
9. Courageously loving ourselves and others.
10. Emphasis on meeting men right where they are.
11. Setting good examples.
12. Providing opportunities to confront conditioning.
13. Allowing oneself to show feelings.
14. Share responsibility; ask for help; knowing it is safe to be one's true self.
15. Recognise one's own inherent nature and that of others.
16. Respect is the minimum.
17. Focus on the humanity of all people.
18. Reaching more into the community.
19. A non-professional, non-medical model.
20. Non-hierarchical: BT welcomes everyone to leadership positions.

DO BETTER:

1. Reach more men, especially more men of colour.
2. Expand the programme, including into more places.
3. Gain more confidence in the goodness of our love of all people.
4. Raise more money.
5. Be more willing to sit with the discomfort and not go to the place of male privilege.
6. Isolate less, connect more.
7. Greater awareness of diversity issues in the BT community.
8. Strengthen commitment to principles over feelings.
9. Find ways for more people to participate in the infrastructure (including attention to class dynamics).
10. Recognise positive and inspirational achievement in men.
11. Deepen, restructure BT 3 (self-led groups).
12. Listen more to the needs of the diverse groups not involved in BT.
13. Have more fun.
14. Continue fellowship with other organisations such as NCBI.
15. Take more risks: no holding back in the community.

Appendix III:

The Survey Instrument

Appendix IV

Invitation to the Survey Parties

Appendix V. Focus Group Handouts

BREAKTHROUGH MEN'S COMMUNITY
LESSONS LEARNED & FUTURE DIRECTIONS
(Sponsored by the Blue Shield Foundation)
Focus Group: educators & allies
February 25, 2008: 7:30 – 9 p.m.

Breakthrough has received a grant from The Blue Shield Foundation to conduct an evaluation of the impact of Breakthrough on the lives of men. The Blue Shield Foundation is especially interested in issues of domestic violence, and they want to see if there are any lessons that can be learned from Breakthrough's 20 year history of working with men in our region. A written survey was completed by 164 Breakthrough graduates in the spring and summer of 2007 and the data have now been analyzed. The next step is to examine some of the findings through the lens of specific focus groups, in this case Breakthrough educators and allies. We really appreciate your time, your insights and your commitment to this project and to Breakthrough.

Ground rules:

- it is not necessary for everyone to respond to every question, though we do want to hear from you all as much as possible;
- we shall be keeping to our time limits on the agenda in order to cover all key issues;
- so please try your best to be brief;
- confidentiality reminder.

Agenda

1. *General Questions*

Tell us about you came to be an educator/ally. Tell us about what it means to you to be an educator/ally.

2. *Responding to survey findings*

A. Key characteristics of educators: before we reveal the survey responses, what do you think they are?

B. Crucial curriculum concepts: before we reveal the survey responses, what do you think they are?

3. *Aspects of the work*

Central question: what are the keys to running an effective small group session?

If time: what else is particularly challenging or satisfying about being an educator or ally?

4. *Recommendations for a training program*

Given what was just said about the tasks of educators and allies, how can Breakthrough best prepare guys to do this?

5. *Anger/violence*

In your experience as an educator/ally, is there a special quality, something noticeably different about working with men with a history of violence or extreme anger? What is your sense of the effectiveness of Breakthrough with men with that background?

93% of respondents said that BT would have a significant and positive impact on perpetrators of domestic violence either as it or with only minor modifications. What might those minor modifications be?

6. Partners/spouses/co-workers

What would your partners, spouses, co-workers, say about the impact of BT on you?

If there are points or telling anecdotes you were not able to contribute at this meeting, or something you think of later, please share by e mail with us at

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seth_pollack@csumb.edu

BREAKTHROUGH MEN'S COMMUNITY
LESSONS LEARNED & FUTURE DIRECTIONS
(Sponsored by the Blue Shield Foundation)
Focus Group: Fathers with Sons
March 3, 2008: 7:30 – 9 p.m.

Breakthrough has received a grant from The Blue Shield Foundation to conduct an evaluation of the impact of Breakthrough on the lives of men. The Blue Shield Foundation is especially interested in issues of domestic violence, and they want to see if there are any lessons that can be learned from Breakthrough's 20 year history of working with men in our region. A written survey was completed by 164 Breakthrough graduates in the spring and summer of 2007 and the data have now been analyzed. The next step is to examine some of the findings through the lens of specific focus groups, in this case Breakthrough educators and allies. We really appreciate your time, your insights and your commitment to this project and to Breakthrough.

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- we shall be keeping to our time limits on the agenda in order to cover all key issues;
- so please try your best to be brief;
- confidentiality reminder.

Agenda

1. General Question

Tell us about what the Breakthrough experience means for you in general and then specifically as a father. How might you characterize your behaviors as a father before Breakthrough and then afterwards?

2. Parenting in general

(a) According to the survey data, certain aspects of the curriculum were seen as most important and most impactful: as you review these features, how would you relate them to your experience as a parent? Which of these categories relates most to changes you have noticed?

(b) We'd also like to share reported changes in terms of handling issues of anger and violence. How would you relate these kinds of changes to your experience as a parent?

(c) The survey also asked an open-ended question about changes in behavior brought about by Breakthrough and a number of responses related to parenting. Again, could you review these quotes and talk about how they might relate to your experiences with parenting before and after Breakthrough?

3. Parenting a son/Breaking the cycle

How has BT affected your relationship with your son(s)?

In the question about the possible impact of BT on your own father, many responses talked about breaking the cycle, of not parenting as one was parented. How much has your approach to parenting your son(s) been a conscious decision not to repeat old patterns in your family? What patterns specifically have you committed to **not** repeating?

4. Spouse/partner/co-worker

Finally, we'd like to shift from parenting to your primary relationship as a spouse or partner, and how your Breakthrough experience effected that relationship? We are hearing that there was almost always some change in one's primary relationship, either improvement or a decision to move on. We'd like to hear your comments on this.

If there are points or telling anecdotes you were not able to contribute at this meeting, or something you think of later, please share by e mail with us at

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BREAKTHROUGH MEN'S COMMUNITY
LESSONS LEARNED & FUTURE DIRECTIONS
(Sponsored by the Blue Shield Foundation)

Focus Group: Teachers

March 10, 2008: 5:30 – 7 p.m.

Breakthrough has received a grant from The Blue Shield Foundation to conduct an evaluation of the impact of Breakthrough on the lives of men. The Blue Shield Foundation is especially interested in issues of domestic violence, and they want to see if there are any lessons that can be learned from Breakthrough's 20 year history of working with men in our region. A written survey was completed by 164 Breakthrough graduates in the spring and summer of 2007 and the data have now been analyzed. The next step is to examine some of the findings through the lens of specific focus groups, in this case Breakthrough educators and allies. We really appreciate your time, your insights and your commitment to this project and to Breakthrough.

Ground rules:

- it is not necessary for everyone to respond to every question, though we do want to hear from you all as much as possible;
- we shall be keeping to our time limits on the agenda in order to cover all key issues;
- so please try your best to be brief;
- confidentiality reminder.

Agenda

1. *General*

What does it mean to you to be a teacher in the BT program?
What aspects are most challenging? Most rewarding?

2. *Survey data*

In this part of the conversation, we would like you to examine some findings from the survey and add your reactions and comments.

(a) Ranking of learning approaches in terms of importance & strength of impact:

1. Small group sessioning
2. Retreats, all-day events, weekends
3. Listening to each other
4. Demonstrations
5. Exercises to release old feelings
6. Lectures
7. Exercises to separate child, adult and carried feelings states
8. Practicing boundaries
9. Sharing life stories with other participants

(b) Qualities of teachers: open-ended question, asking for the key qualities that had the most impact: key categories:

- deep knowledge of the material
- great presenters
- modeling adult male loving behavior;
- being present, shewing attention, good listener;
- non-judgmental;
- deep knowledge of the material;
- approachable, human, fallible;
- able to clearly communicate feeling states;
- intuitive sensitivity;
- flexibility, adapting to individual differences.

Some typical comments, first, teachers only:

- *“I appreciated the abundance of information on so many topics and how professionally presented. It became obvious from the start that the information was well researched, refined and presented (verbally and written) so that everyone/anyone could understand it, no matter what “learning style” the participant had. I came to appreciate the sequence of the information delivered so that each piece of information obtained had the potential to be used as a tool for subsequent information.”*
- *“Giving life to the material, not just lecturing.”*
- *“Clear communication skills. Sense of humor. Sense of theater. Good story tellers.”*
- *“Articulating the key concepts in a clear, concise and organized way that had a very clear objective.”*
- *1. Passion for the work/ 2. Compassion for participants/ 3. Honestly/ 4. Intelligence/ 5. Perseverance*
- *Loving and confident, while honest with all. Really knew how to measure (choice of words) language to better interpret the messages. He also would have moments of realization and would share them or appreciate profound insights from others. Leadership remarkable!*
- *integrity, honesty, sincerely, empirical knowledge of issues*
- *effective demonstration of session work ability to keep people out of "story" and focused on internal feelings committed and empathetic inclusive*
- *courage- not being afraid of being judged by me or the group/ consistency- consistent in their message, behavior (role modeling) and presence/ faith- believing in our goodness even when we didn't believe in our own goodness*
- *skilled presenter, knowledgeable, funny, entertaining, effective, organized, committed to making a difference in men's lives*

Then about teachers and educators:

- *“I had a new model of a loving man to see and use as a template. I gained a broader view of being male and fully adult.”*
- *“Loving. All of these men put their lives on hold for hundreds of hours . . . just to be there and help us!!! What adjectives do you put on that? See how loving all men can be: accepting, good natured, compassionate.”*
- *“The unconditional love received from ... educators was life-changing.”*
- *“Ability to listen, be present. I have never had someone listen to me with such presence. Truly being nonjudgmental, making a safe environment.”*
- *“Loving me, holding a space for me, being proud of me, listening to me, encouraging me. I started to realize I mattered.”*
- *“I was so impressed at how the educators and allies were non-judgmental and supportive. Their attention was very helpful in healing my wounds of distrust and humiliation from other males . . . I learned about feeling safe.”*
- *“Because I was not judged and because I felt loved, I was able to learn how to be gentle and loving with myself. This changed my inner life completely.”*

(c) Aspects of the curriculum with most impact and meaning:

- Boundaries, inherent nature were the top 2;
- followed by Self-esteem,
- Reclaiming one's complete goodness as fully human males,
- giving and receiving supportive love and attention,
- active listening, and
- the nature and effects of childhood trauma.

3. *Your preparation*

What was involved in your decision that you were ready to be a BT teacher? Please mention both internal factors (personal motivation) and external issues (experience as an educator, conversations with teachers, etc).

4. *The training of more teachers*

What are the prerequisites for being an effective BT teacher? What do you recognize, for example, in an educator that might lead you to nominate him as a possible teacher? Given everything that has been said about being a BT teacher, what might an effective recruiting and training program look like?

5. *Violence and anger issues*

As teachers, is there a special quality, something noticeably different about working with men with a history of violence or extreme anger? What is your sense of the effectiveness of Breakthrough with men with that background?

93% of survey respondents said that BT would have a significant and positive impact on perpetrators of domestic violence either as it or with only minor modifications. What might those minor modifications be?

6. *The continued growth & development of BT*

As teachers, what do you see as the major opportunities for Breakthrough to grow and develop as an organization? And what are the most significant challenges in achieving that growth and development?

Specifically in terms of pedagogy and the curriculum, how do new ideas get into this work while maintaining the core values and structure of BT?

If there are points or telling anecdotes you were not able to contribute at this meeting, or something you think of later, please share by e mail with us at

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BREAKTHROUGH MEN'S COMMUNITY
LESSONS LEARNED & FUTURE DIRECTIONS
(Sponsored by the Blue Shield Foundation)

Focus Group #4

March 17, 2008: 7:30 – 9 p.m.

Breakthrough has received a grant from The Blue Shield Foundation to conduct an evaluation of the impact of Breakthrough on the lives of men. The Blue Shield Foundation is especially interested in issues of domestic violence, and they want to see if there are any lessons that can be learned from Breakthrough's 20 year history of working with men in our region. A written survey was completed by 164 Breakthrough graduates in the spring and summer of 2007 and the data have now been analyzed. The next step is to examine some of the findings through the lens of specific focus groups, in this case Breakthrough educators and allies. We really appreciate your time, your insights and your commitment to this project and to Breakthrough.

Ground rules:

- it is not necessary for everyone to respond to every question, though we do want to hear from you all as much as possible;
- we shall be keeping to our time limits on the agenda in order to cover all key issues;
- so please try your best to be brief and to the point;
- confidentiality reminder: "One focus group participant commented that . . ."

Agenda

1. *General*

Tell us about what brought you to Breakthrough. How would you describe your experience with the program? How would you characterize your life before and after Breakthrough?

2. *Comments on results*

We would like to share with you some of the findings of the Breakthrough survey and ask for your reactions (makes sense, puzzling, true in my case, not true in my case, examples). The first indicates the change in participants' expression of anger before and after Breakthrough.

The second is a list of the concepts, insights, tools and skills learned in breakthrough and used subsequently in controlling violent or reckless behavior.

3. *Impact*

Another finding from the survey is that Breakthrough has had either a considerable or an enormous impact on the great majority of participants. Please comment on the impact in your own case. In particular, we are interested in those aspects of Breakthrough which helped you with the healing part of the work.

4. *Anger/violence*

Setting aside for the moment the issue of bringing mandated men into regular Breakthrough, 93% of respondents said that Breakthrough would have a significant and positive impact on perpetrators of domestic violence either as is or with only minor modifications. What might those minor modifications be? What might be the appeal to perpetrators of domestic violence of coming to and sticking with a version of Breakthrough? What might you do in the first 3 sessions of a Breakthrough course for men mandated to be there?

5. *Spouse/partner*

Finally, we'd like to talk about your primary relationship as a spouse or partner, and how your Breakthrough experience affected that relationship? We are hearing that there was almost always some change, either improvement or a decision to move on. We'd like to hear your comments on this.

If there are points or telling anecdotes you were not able to contribute at this meeting, or something you think of later, please share by e mail with us at

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BREAKTHROUGH MEN'S COMMUNITY
LESSONS LEARNED & FUTURE DIRECTIONS
(Sponsored by the Blue Shield Foundation)

Focus Group 5

March 24, 2008: 7:30 – 9 p.m.

Breakthrough has received a grant from The Blue Shield Foundation to conduct an evaluation of the impact of Breakthrough on the lives of men. The Blue Shield Foundation is especially interested in issues of domestic violence, and they want to see if there are any lessons that can be learned from Breakthrough's 20 year history of working with men in our region. A written survey was completed by 164 Breakthrough graduates in the spring and summer of 2007 and the data have now been analyzed. The next step is to examine some of the findings through the lens of specific focus groups, in this case Breakthrough educators and allies. We really appreciate your time, your insights and your commitment to this project and to Breakthrough.

Ground rules:

- it is not necessary for everyone to respond to every question, though we do want to hear from you all as much as possible;
- we shall be keeping to our time limits on the agenda in order to cover all key issues;
- so please try your best to be brief;
- confidentiality reminder.

Agenda

1. *General Question*

Talk about your experience with BT. What brought you to the program? What was your life like before and after BT?

2. *Your participation*

We'd like you to take a look at some findings on patterns of participation after Breakthrough. What strikes you in general as you examine these data? More specifically, please tell us about how you have participated in Breakthrough since graduation, and what factors have limited your participation.

3. *Self-led groups (BT3)*

Now we would like to specifically consider the case of the self-led groups.

- (a) First, if you never got involved in a self-led group, can you talk about the factors in that decision. Specifically, do you have any comment on the presentations at the end of Breakthrough 2 which dealt with these groups?
- (b) If you did have an involvement, we'd like you to take a look at some more findings and comment on your own experience. In general, we are looking for responses to these questions: what facilitates a self-led group and what impedes it?
- (c) Finally in this part, we'd like to share some findings on what causes self-led groups to become extinct. Any comments? Anything to add from your own experiences?

4. *Issues of anger and reckless behavior*

Please take a look at some findings on dealing with anger and comment from your own experience.

5. *Spouse/partner/co-worker*

Finally, we'd like to shift from parenting to your primary relationship as a spouse or partner, and how your BT experience effected that relationship? We are hearing that there was almost always some change, either improvement or a decision to move on. We'd like to hear your comments on this.

If there are points or telling anecdotes you were not able to contribute at this meeting, or something you think of later, please share by e mail with us at

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BREAKTHROUGH MEN'S COMMUNITY
LESSONS LEARNED & FUTURE DIRECTIONS
(Sponsored by the Blue Shield Foundation)
Focus Group: Spouses & Partners
March 31, 2008: 7:30 – 9 p.m.

Breakthrough has received a grant from The Blue Shield Foundation to conduct an evaluation of the impact of Breakthrough on the lives of men. The Blue Shield Foundation is especially interested in issues of domestic violence, and they want to see if there are any lessons that can be learned from Breakthrough's 20 year history of working with men in our region. A written survey was completed by 164 Breakthrough graduates in the spring and summer of 2007 and the data have now been analyzed. The next step is to examine some of the findings through the lens of specific focus groups, in this case Breakthrough educators and allies. We really appreciate your time, your insights and your commitment to this project and to Breakthrough.

Ground rules:

- it is not necessary for everyone to respond to every question, though we do want to hear from you all as much as possible;
- we shall be keeping to our time limits on the agenda in order to cover all key issues;
- so please try your best to be brief;
- confidentiality reminder.

Agenda

1. General Questions

We would like to hear your general impressions of Breakthrough: what are some interesting or important features of Breakthrough as you yourself observed and experienced it?

2. Comments on results: overall

We would like to share with you some of the findings from our survey and get your opinion: does anything surprise you? Does anything ring particularly true for you? We begin with the men's estimate of the overall impact of Breakthrough on their life.

3. Impact on relationship

The next thing we'd like to examine is the impact on relationships with a spouse or partner. Let's begin with the data. Again, anything surprising or particularly true? How would you characterize the impact of Breakthrough on your relationship?

Please think about these specific issues: the expression of feelings; the management of anger; the reduction or elimination of addictive behaviors.

4. Kinds of change

One key finding in the survey is the report that Breakthrough graduates are able to express their feelings appropriately, especially positive feelings. So we were wondering: if your man is able to recognize the good in everyone in his life and can express his appreciation and love clearly and often? Does that ring true? If so, what is that like for you?

Finally, from the data, we'd like to share some before and after statements with you. Again, we welcome your comments and any specific stories that capture particular changes.

5. Just wondering

If you had a friend looking for a new relationship, how strongly would you recommend a man solely on the grounds that he was a Breakthrough graduate?

If there are points or telling anecdotes you were not able to contribute at this meeting, or something you think of later, please share by e mail with us at

pshaw@miis.edu

seth_pollack@csumb.edu

Appendix VI: Organizational development Group Meeting Report (March 6, 2008) Growth Out of Fulfillment

March 6, 2008, Stokes Restaurant, Monterey, California

Breakthrough Organization Development

Nine men, seven graduates of the Breakthrough Men's Community (BMC) Workshops, two, its friends, and one, its founder and director, met to consider the implications for future development of the BMC of an impact survey of program graduates. The survey, conducted under the auspices of a Blue Shield Foundation grant, solicited responses from 485 men, graduates of the program over the past 20 years, about the impact of the program on their lives and their suggestions for improvement. 164 responses (34% of graduates who were sent a survey/26.5% of total graduates) have yielded a bounty of information and impression. The nine men present have been assembled to begin a conversation about the future direction of the BMC, and the evening is billed as an Organization Development (OD) discussion. (Perhaps the group could be called the Breakthrough Men's Community Organization Development Committee or BMCODC.)

Of the eight graduates present, seven graduated from the basic workshops six or more years ago (some nearly two decades ago), while one has been a graduate only two years. All of the graduates have participated in ongoing self-led groups, summer retreats and community programs. Two of the graduates are academics and social scientists who designed, conducted and compiled the results of the survey. One is a carpenter, builder, and organization consultant; another owns a tree service; one is an educational technologist, and another a retired human resources executive, teacher and writer. Of the outsiders, one is a Unitarian Minister in the local community, the other a professional non-profit organization administrator and organization development consultant. The youngest is in his thirties, the oldest 66.

Tonight the talk is facilitated by Horatio Trujillo, the outsider who has personal connections to the BMC through the founders' family, and a wealth of experience in group facilitation and non-profit organization development. He steers the conversation with some basic orienting questions:

- **What was the major strength of Breakthrough as reflected in the survey?**
- **Where could the organization be in 10 years/5 years?**
- **What changes or enhancements to the design of the program does the survey suggest?**
- **What might some "next steps" be for the BMCODC and the organization as a whole?**

Opening

To open the evening, Horacio invited each man to share his feelings about being present at this meeting. Everyone expressed enthusiasm, commitment, pleasure, high expectations, and appreciation.

For the next three hours a wide ranging conversation ensued over a delicious meal and modest quantities of good California wine. What follows is my attempt to capture something of the spirit of that conversation as well as its most salient points. There is no attempt to attribute individual ideas to any particular man. (Anyone wishing more details may obtain a recording of the evening from Gus Leonard at gus.leonared@csumb.edu.) Nor will I confine myself to the usual passive voice (*it was felt; it was argued; it was pointed out*; etc.) Rather I will attempt to capture in summary the thinking that went on. This will inevitably involve some reduction in complexity and perhaps my own bias and opinion will loom large. I invite my fellow diners to step forward to correct any corruptions that may have crept into my account and point out anything that I have overlooked or misrepresented.

First, let me point out that our assignment was to bring our sense of what the survey was telling us, not simply offer our own ideas or opinion. This required some detachment, and, speaking for myself, was probably not 100% successful. Inevitably, my own predispositions colored my comments; but the survey was our text, and as far as I can determine, we departed from it only when our conversation entered into territory not specifically addressed in the survey (e.g., in our brainstorm of possible next steps for the organization/program, though it is true that our projections were rooted in comments and observations that can be found in the survey document.) And because each participant had prepared a written response to the survey, we felt free to step beyond the literal content of the survey into areas that were either not addressed or addressed only in embryonic fashion.

Key Strength?

As for Horatio's initial question ("*What did the survey respondents indicate was the key strength or impact area of their Breakthrough experience?*") the discussion oscillated between the two dimensions of individual learning and tools, and what might be called socialization or community development. The learning and tools dimension focused on the content transferred in the workshops regarding self-esteem, reality creation, boundaries, listening, the healing process, child development, inherent nature, differentiation of feelings, inner and adaptive child states, feeling management, anger, sexuality, addictions, etc. The value of this content and the "golden tools" that men are taught in the workshops vie in importance with the social dimension, the "container" that is created in the workshop where men feel safe, heard, supported -- *loved* -- and the relief experienced at finding oneself in a space where it is no longer necessary to play the male role, where value is not dependent on performance, and feelings are honored and encouraged. If I am not mistaken, the consensus emerged that while the unique synthesis of rich and important content and highly effective learning methods provided in the workshops are highly valued, the uniqueness of Breakthrough lies in the creation of community that emerges during the 30+ weeks of workshop time and, at least to some degree, continues thereafter.

An interesting side conversation addressed the question of whether Breakthrough should be positioned and thought of as a healing process (e.g., therapeutic in the largest sense), or as a program for personal and spiritual growth (discovery of and living from inherent nature). In a

sense it is certainly both, though demographically, most survey respondents entered Breakthrough for healing in some sense of the word (many referred by their therapists), and many speak of their experience as one of recovery from symptoms (e.g. depression) or behaviors (e.g. addictions, inappropriate anger expression) through self discovery and learning. Perhaps the broader envelope of "education" in the highest and most expansive sense encompasses both the healing and growth dimensions: participants learn things in Breakthrough that enable them to break self defeating habits and coping patterns and enjoy expanded possibilities of self experiencing and relating to others. (*Education* from the Latin *educere*, to lead or bring out , i.e., to lead out of old behaviors and to bring out and manifest inherent nature.)⁴

The question of what Breakthrough "is" is not merely academic: it determines both our client/participant target and potential "market." To date, Breakthrough has benefited mostly high competency, relatively affluent and highly educated men, not men with recognizable acute "mental illnesses" or those on the margins of society either economically or socially. Certainly there is a minority of participants who fall in or near these categories. But the mainstream participant, as reflected in the survey, is white, middle class, early middle age, college educated and at least relatively affluent.⁵ It would require some adjustment to the program to significantly expand this participant base to include, for example, non-white populations, criminal offenders, homeless, drug and alcohol abusers who are still in heavily addicted states, etc. There are participants in all of these categories, but the bull's eye of the target population is early middle aged men who are living with considerable distress and dysfunction in some areas of their lives, but who, on the surface, are "successful," mainstream "producers" who have developed relatively effective coping mechanisms to deal with life, but who are at a deeper level, profoundly dissatisfied with their inner experience. Their discomfort is acute, and there are flags in their experience, especially in the area of male-female relationships, that drive them to seek solutions and resolutions for their underlying distress. The impact of the program on this audience as reflected in the survey is unmistakable and profound.

Ten Years Out?

Question number two asked us to think into the future and consider what the BMC might look like and what it might be doing in 10 years. Some sort of expansion seemed to be in everyone's vision: expansion of the existing program to include a more diverse client population in terms of age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or communities plagued with violence (e.g., Salinas); "getting Breakthrough into" existing organizations, be they churches, schools (from high school to higher education); integrating with outreach agencies to oppressed minorities, youth, recovering

⁴ In an email of March 19, Fred responded to this issue as follows: "From beginning to end the BT program focuses on affirming our reality and strengthening our Inherent Nature as a foundation for life journey. The fact that important healing takes place with such an emphasis in such a container is an effect but not the overall focus of the design. Neither one of these descriptors is absolute, but if one were to make a generalization about what the program is about. it is more accurate to say that it is about strengthening the hearts and minds of men than to say it is a healing program. As we affirm our truth and our value in a loving and safe container, we allow the body to release the unhealed feelings and healing takes place." It remains true, however, that as far as survey respondents are concerned, "healing" seems to be the impact of prime importance.

⁵ Fred also challenged this characterization of our primary audience. His perception is that Breakthrough, by virtue of its cost structure, is targeting "working class" and middle class men, rather than "professional" men and that our graduate population reflects that. I have no data to argue this point. My conclusions are derived from the demographics as reported in the survey. Fred suggests that the survey format itself could have skewed the response: a 20 page written document requiring written responses might have led to self-selection of respondents.

"addicts" of all persuasions (drug, alcohol, sex, gambling, etc.) ranked high in everyone's wish list. And of course, the idea of a geographically expanded Breakthrough (taking the program outside the Central Coast) was seen as highly desirable.

The survey respondents cautioned, and our group agreed, however, that before this level of expansion could occur, there needs to be some work done on the current program and local organization. This focused on defining the organizational processes that constitute the BMC (i.e., How do we want to function as a community?), to developing support for ongoing small groups post workshop (Breakthrough 3). The survey highlighted the need for process definition and guidelines for small groups, as well as the need for training and quality control of workshop leaders, be they presenters or educators or allies. The feeling was that only when these internal processes and training systems are in place can we realistically consider geographic expansion, say to a pilot program in San Diego.

A final list of several options for the BMC 10 to 15 years out was generated. These included:

- *Being a model community which offers an alternative culture for men in which the goal is surrender to and manifestation of our inherent nature.*
- *Expanding locally through increased diversity and strong enrollment programs*
- *Test geographic expansion (e.g. San Diego, Santa Cruz, Seattle), leading to broad geographic expansion (nation/world wide)*
- *Targeted expansion to specific populations, which might include "parcelization" of the program or adaptation of the program to specific audience needs (e.g., domestic violence abatement programs)*

There was also discussion about how the content of the program could be developed or refined to expand upon key areas, (e.g., fear), either through the modification and refinement of the existing workshop curriculum or through the development and expansion of a post-graduate curriculum.

Everyone agreed that the future of Breakthrough was not only unlimited, but was mandatory. The only limiting factors are felt to be the development of transferable processes and leadership capabilities.

Next Steps?

When asking about "Next Steps," the things that emerged fell into two categories: program and operational. In the program area, once again, the need to beef up the "post-graduate" offerings through strengthening small or self-led groups seemed dominant. Additional training and support

for workshop leaders (all areas) was also cited as something that should receive immediate attention.

Operational issues included the need for a "permanent" Breakthrough space or facility and the need for development of a firmer funding base for the organization through foundation grants and donations. The idea that a book about the Breakthrough experience would be beneficial for participants, future enrollment, and publicity/public relations received general support.

Everyone agreed on the need for a dedicated organization development group or committee to continue the process begun tonight. That body's relationship with the existing Board of Directors and the current "Five Year Plan" needs to be established. Perhaps the first item on the agenda of that group would be the writing of a development action plan, with specific action steps, goals and objectives, time lines, resource needs, human and otherwise, and tangible enactment strategies.

A remaining item which deserves mention is the ongoing role of the founder/director. Everyone is fully aware of and enormously appreciative of the contributions Fred has made in the creation and development of the BMC. The question of transitioning from a "sole proprietorship" organization to one capable of being replicated without the presence and personal vision of the founder/director and outside his direct control is one which requires some sensitive attention. Everyone agreed that Fred's leadership style was entirely compatible with projected growth; however, the transition from founder-driven to self-sustaining is not simple or easy to make. There seemed, though, to be a high level of confidence among all present that it can be done.

Closing

In closing, each man offered his appreciations for Horatio's flawless facilitation and shared his present feelings about the conversation that had transpired during the evening. Remarks ranged from "challenged," "thrilled", and "honored," to "hopeful" and "humbled." Perhaps the most succinct and, for me, powerful summary of the vision that had emerged during the evening was: "*Growth out of fulfillment.*" I do not recall who articulated this, but it seems to me to capture the intentions of the group brilliantly: We will grow Breakthrough through fulfilling our glorious potential as individuals and as a community.

Respectfully submitted,
Robert (Bobee) Weston

On behalf of:

Seth Pollack, Peter Shaw, Craig Spencer, Bill Lutz, Horacio Trujillo, Greg Ward, Gus Leonard and Fred Jealous

First draft: March 16, 2008

Final draft: April 4, 2008

Appendix VII:
BMC Town Hall Meeting (May 8, 2008)
A study of the twenty years work of the...



Lessons Learned and Future Directions
Sponsored by the Blue Shield of California Foundation

Town Hall Meeting
Thursday May 8, 2008

6:30: Gallery Walk and Conversation

7:15: Introduction and Welcome
Bobee Weston

7:20: DATA PRESENTATION I: Who are we?
Seth Pollack and Peter Shaw

7:55: DATA PRESENTATION II: What is the impact of Breakthrough?
Seth Pollack and Peter Shaw

8:50: FUTURE OPPORTUNITIIES & POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS
Horacio Trujillo

9:25: CLOSING
Bobee Weston

"Breakthrough saved my life. I live instead of coping."

**Appendix VIII:
BMC Community Forum (June 19, 2008): Agenda**

A study of the twenty years of work of the
Breakthrough Men's Community
Lessons Learned and Future Directions

Sponsored by the Blue Shield of California Foundation

COMMUNITY FORUM
Thursday, June 19, 2008

12:00 - 12:20	Welcome and Lunch
12:20 - 12:30	Introduction: Robert Weston, Chairman, Board of Directors, BMC
12:30 - 12:45	History and Evolution of Breakthrough; the genesis of the Blue Shield Foundation study: Fred Jealous, Founder and Director, BMC
12:45 - 1:00	Findings I: What is Breakthrough? Seth Pollack <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Overview of the study➤ Breakthrough curriculum and pedagogy
1:00 - 1:15	Findings II: Demographics and General Impact: Peter Shaw <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Demographics of Breakthrough participants➤ Motivations for joining Breakthrough➤ General impact of the program➤ The nature of key changes
1:15 - 1:45	Findings III: Impact on anger and violence: Seth Pollack <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Impact on anger➤ Impact on expressions of anger, including violence➤ Impact on fathers, sons, and parenting
1:45 - 1:55	Questions, comments and discussion
1:55 - 2:00	Concluding remarks: Next steps: Robert Weston

“Breakthrough saved my life. I live instead of coping.”

Appendix IX
BMC Summer Retreat Flyer



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