**Essential Connections**

Ask participants the following 13 personal questions and let them know that the answers are not going to be shared with anyone. Give about 30 seconds to answer each question.

1. What is your main source of information about the world around you? (The New York Times, People magazine, etc.)
2. Who is the most important person in your life?
3. What groups do you belong to?
4. What is the one thing you’ve worked hardest for in life?
5. What is your greatest source of joy?
6. What has your culture taught you to value?
7. If you have children, who is the most important person in their life besides you?
8. How do you support yourself and your family financially?
9. Who are the family members/friends you are closest to?
10. What is the place you call home?
11. What does it mean to you to be a good person?
12. What makes you feel good about yourself?
13. What roles give your life meaning and purpose?

Tell participants “Please look at your lists. You have created a picture of the most important elements of your life. I’m now going to ask you to cross one thing of the list. When you cross it off, imagine that you are eliminating that thing from your life forever. That means if you said the New York Times is your main source of information and you crossed it off, it mean you’ll never read it again or look at a headline. If you cross off a person it means you’ll never see that person again. Now everyone cross off one item.

Ask participants how they felt and whether it was difficult. Tell participants “I’m going to ask you to cross another item off your list.” Continue until at least half the items are gone.

Ask participants how it felt, whether it was difficult, why it was difficult, whether anyone refused to cross things off, and then ask if anyone knows why they did this exercise.

Tell participants “These are the choices you’re asking a survivor of domestic violence to make when you ask them to leave their partner.” Because of the dynamics of isolation, the abusive partner is often the main or only source of information about the world around them; the abusive partner is the most important person in their life, besides their children; the abusive partner might be the survivor’s greatest source of joy because abuse doesn’t happen all the time. Ask participants to think about how many things a survivor has to give up if they leave their abusive partner- neighborhood, friends, work, family, school, church…think about how many of those things a survivor has to give up forever if they choose to leave the abusive relationship and relocate, even go into shelter or hiding where they can’t go home.