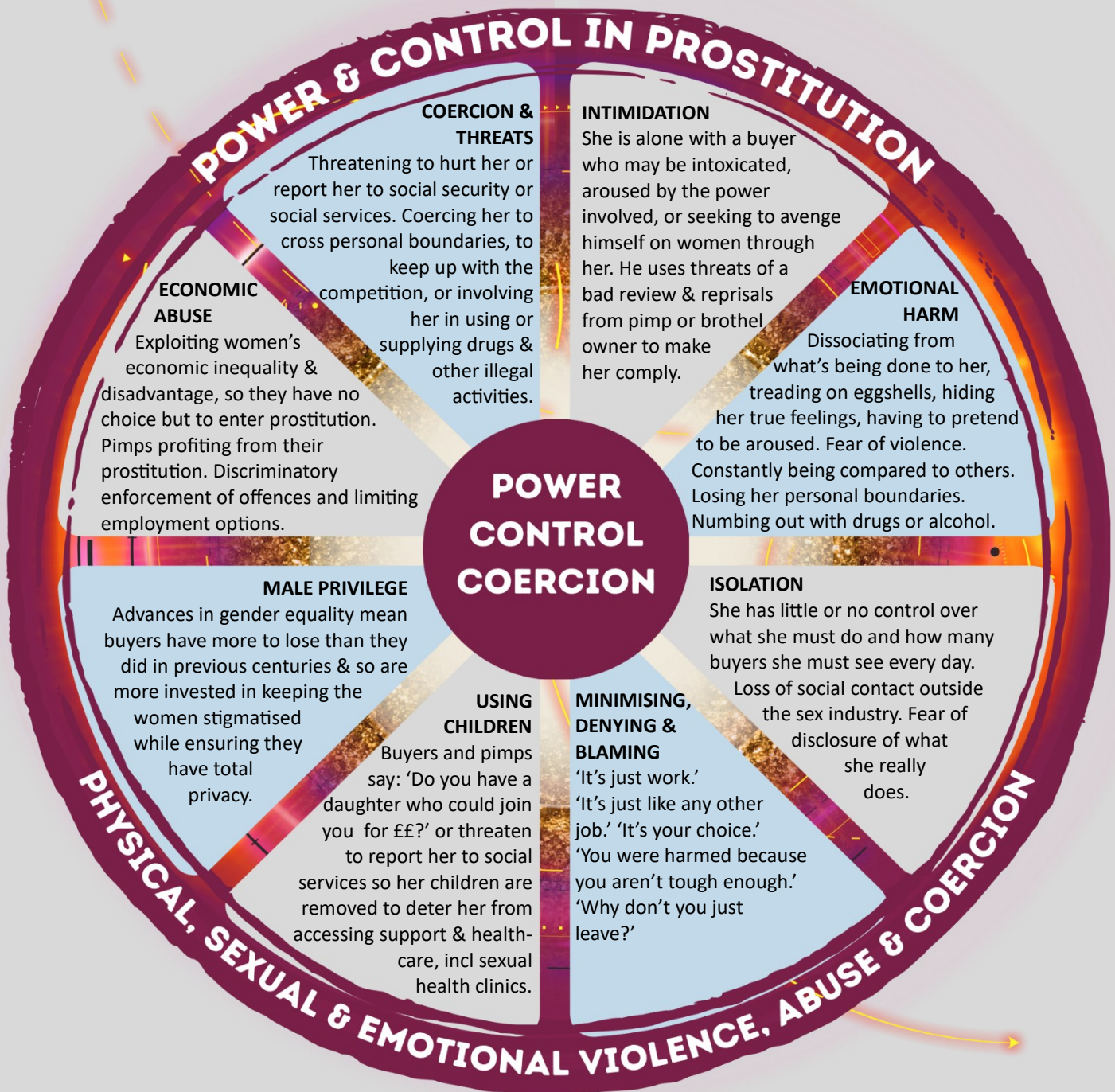


Power, Control and Coercion in Prostitution



Originally created by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project in Duluth, Minnesota, the **Power and Control Wheel** is a way of visualising the complex interplay of abusive and violent behaviours that domestic abusers utilise in intimate relationships. It has now been used to throw light on abusive behaviours in many other situations. Here we use it to raise awareness of the violence, abuse and coercion inherent to prostitution.

Why doesn't she just leave?

People say that prostitution is a free choice and that if she doesn't like it, she should leave. People used to say that about women trapped in domestic abuse situations, but now, thanks to initiatives like the Power and Control Wheel, more people understand the complex interplay of forces that make it hard, if not impossible, for her to escape. Understanding the interlocking forces that keep women trapped in prostitution makes it clear that the idea it is a free choice is little more than an illusion. Here are some of the things that may make her feel there is no point attempting to leave.

- Outright coercion, abuse, or violence from her pimp.
- Concern about where and how she will live if she exits the sex industry and whether it will improve her situation.
- Concern about whether someone else will take advantage of her vulnerable status.
- Not knowing where to turn for help, particularly if English is not her first language.
- Lack of suitable drug and alcohol rehabilitation services.
- Not having recourse to public funds due to her immigration status.
- Concern about being deported as an illegal immigrant.
- Needing to repay debts, including debts she or her family may owe to traffickers.
- Social isolation. Those who have profited from her exploitation may have gone to considerable lengths to isolate her.
- Blaming herself.
- Being seen as having brought shame on herself or her family if she returns to them.
- Lack of confidence or self-belief.
- Lack of hope that things will get better.
- Fear that she will be tracked down or that her involvement in prostitution will be disclosed to others.
- Loss of identity due to belittling behaviour, always having to pretend that she was experiencing pleasure, having to tread on eggshells with buyers, and other forms of coercive control.
- Believing for many different reasons that staying where she is will be less of a risk.
- Fear that she may be seen as having betrayed her friends in the sex industry by exiting or that she may face disapproval or be shunned by them for having done so.
- Concern about how she will make a living outside the industry and how she will support her children.
- Hope that the level of income she made when she was a "new girl" will return.
- Fear about what someone controlling her will do if she leaves.
- Having invested so much emotionally in the idea that the sex industry is empowering, she is desperate to make it work despite all the evidence to the contrary.
- Hope that her experience will change.



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