A very simple way to evaluate the critical outcomes of our work:

For people experiencing a pattern of power, control and exploitation; called “survivors”

- Self-determination
- Safety*

For people establishing a pattern of power, control and exploitation; called “abusers”

- Accountability

*Note: the order is important! **Self-determination is prioritized over safety.** When a conflict between these two critical outcomes arises, promoting Self-determination is the primary obligation of advocacy.

At times, the anti-violence movement has prioritized “safety” over “self-determination”, building many services based on the idea that, “If we make a survivor safe, than she can start to increase her self-determination.” In our experience, the opposite is true. Instead of a **product** of safety, self-determination is a necessary pre-condition to creating sustainable, authentic safety in one’s life.

The Washington State Administrative Code’s definition of advocacy-based counseling verifies the importance of this building block concept. *(a big “Right On!” to the women that ensured this concept was codified in the WAC):*

**WAC 388-61A-0145** Advocacy-based counseling means the involvement of a client with an advocate counselor in an individual, family, or group session with the primary focus on safety and on empowerment of the client through reinforcing the client’s autonomy and self-determination.

That is to say: Advocates work to fortify peoples’ self-determination so that those people may empower themselves and create safety for themselves.

Still, many well-meaning anti-violence programs continue to focus on safety almost to the exclusion of self-determination.

To sum up:

**Self-determination** is the MEANS, **Safety & Empowerment** are the ENDS.