

Children Hurt Too: How You Can Help

December 2014: Revised by Kellie Rogers and Jen Dieringer of Sound Mental Health Childrens' DV Response Team

December 2007: Third Printing and Revision

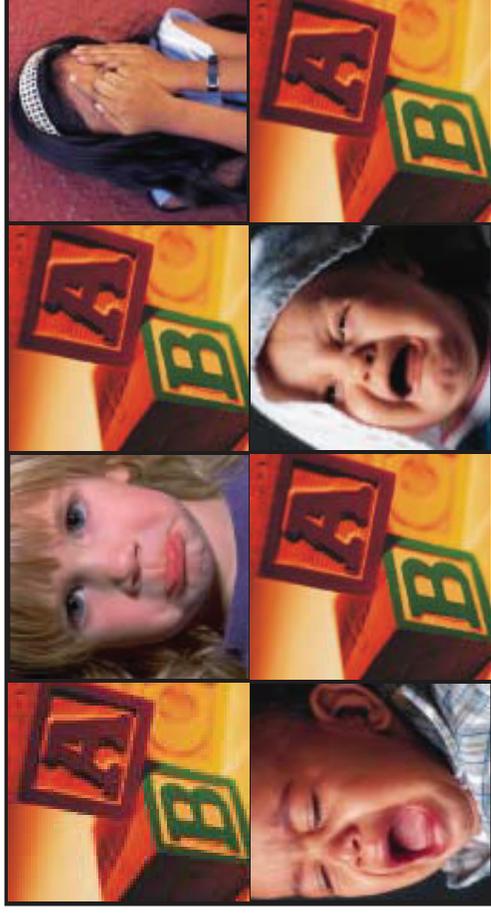
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Children Hurt Too:



How You Can Help

Dear Parent:

This booklet was produced by a group of police officers in order to help educate non-abusive parents understand the cycle of domestic violence. When responding to domestic violence calls, police and other responders have seen children who are frightened, hurt, and confused about what is going on in their homes. Responders aren't able to talk to these children about the violence, and we know that many parents aren't able to talk to them either for many different valid reasons. Domestic violence is very hard to talk about with anyone!

When domestic violence occurs in a family, children are impacted in many different ways. This booklet contains information that can help parents to talk to their children about the violence, and help children to recover from their experience. The resource guide at the back of the booklet will provide more information about counseling for yourself or your children.

The text for this booklet was adapted from **Helping Children Who Witness Domestic Violence: A Guide for Parents**, by Meg Crager and Lily Anderson. Fourth Edition, 2014. Thank you to Kellie Rogers and Jen Dieringer of Sound Mental Health Children's DV Response Team for their revisions; and to the King County VAWA STOP Grant (#2013-WF-AX-0055) for formatting and translation support.

Third Edition, 2007. Thank you to Meg Crager and Lily Anderson for their revisions.

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CHILD CARE RESOURCES

Child Care Resources Referral Line: Assistance with child care referrals & resources www.childcare.org 206-329-5544 or 1-877-543-0059

Working Connections Child Care (WCCC)

WA State Dept. of Early Learning www.del.wa.gov/
(select child care & pre-school options)..... 1-877-501-2233

LEGAL INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Eastside Legal Assistance Program: East & Northeast King County
www.elap.org 425-747-7274

King County Neighborhood Legal Clinics: Countywide 206-267-7070

King County Protection Order Advocacy Programs:

Regional Justice Center Kent Division 206-205-7406
King County Courthouse Seattle 206-477-1103

King County Bar Association Lawyer Referral: Ask for

Domestic Violence assistance www.kcba.org 206-267-7010

King County Family Law Facilitators:

Help with legal forms & information on legal procedures for parenting plans, child support, & family law issues Seattle.....206-296-9092 Kent 206-205-2526

Northwest Immigrant Rights Project: Help for refugees or immigrants with immigration issues 206-587-4009

Northwest Justice Project:

Ask for Domestic Violence assistance
www.nwjustice.org Online legal resource directory
..... 206-464-1519 or 1-888-201-1012

Legal Voice: Help with legal information & referral 206-682-9552

Office of Support Enforcement:

Child Support Resource Center
www.dshs.wa.gov/dcs/services 206-341-7000

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAMS (continued)

NW Family Life: Faith-Based DV Support..... 206-363-9601

Northwest Network: Bisexual, Trans, Gay & Lesbian Survivors
www.northwestnetwork.org 206-568-7777

Refugee Women's Alliance: multilingual advocacy in 14 languages
www.rewa.org..... 206-721-0243

Seattle Indian Health Board: www.sihb.org206-324-9360 x 2806

YWCA --East Cherry Branch: Seattle -- African American communities
www.ywcaworks.org 206-568-7845

YWCA-- South King County Domestic Violence Services
www.ywcaworks.org 425-226-1266
(Also provides specialized children and Domestic Violence program)

SPECIALIZED RESOURCES FOR TEENS

Step Up: Services for teens who have been violent with a parent
..... 206-296-7841

Teen Alcohol & Drug Helpline: 24 Hrs..... 206-722-4222

Teen Health Clinics: www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/locations/teenclinics..... 206-296-4600

Teen Link: 24 hour, and staffed by teens 6-10 pm
<http://866teenlink.org> 1-866-833-6546 or 206-461-4922

Youth Eastside Services: Confidential counseling & support
..... 425-747-4937



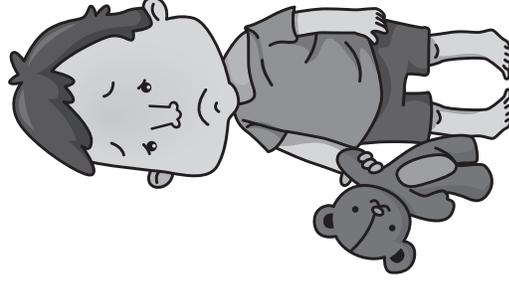
Does Domestic Violence Impact Children?

If you are a parent who is a victim of domestic violence, it is important to know that the violence is not your fault. The impact of the violence on your children is not your fault. You can help your children by talking with them, listening to them and recognizing that the many different types of domestic violence affects them too.

Many parents think that their children don't know when there is domestic violence in their home. Their children may be acting "normal," doing well in school, and playing with their friends. Or if the child is acting aggressively, parents may think that their child just has a temper problem. Almost all children feel the effects of controlling behavior by one parent in their home and are impacted by it in some way. Every child responds differently. Some children may talk about the impact, while others communicate through their actions. Children often have difficult and painful feelings, learn negative lessons, and act out in destructive ways as a result of the violence and controlling behaviors.

Children may feel powerless, confused, angry, guilty, worried, and scared. They may learn that violence is an appropriate way to deal with problems, or that abuse is normal. In response to the violence or controlling behaviors, they might fight with other children, have sleep problems or physical illness, or act very withdrawn and shy.

Many children are physically and emotionally harmed when they experience domestic violence. Most children are very resilient, and they can recover with help from their parents, and from other supportive, non-violent people in their lives.



Safety Planning With Your Children

Unfortunately, children can be physically and emotionally endangered when domestic violence occurs. It is important to help them find ways to stay safe. Developing a safety plan with your kids can be very simple or more complex, based on what is appropriate for your family. It's very likely that you or your children have already created safety measures in your home and have just not talked about it or put a label on it. Most children are extremely wise and resourceful in developing their own personal steps to be as safe as possible. Safe behaviors they have created may be seen as destructive behaviors by others.

The goals for the safety plan are usually:

1. For children to be physically safe
2. For them to know where and how to get help.

When safety planning with kids, it is important to let them know that they are NOT responsible for the violence, and they can NOT stop it. The first step in safety planning is talking to your kids about the behaviors of domestic violence in the safest way possible for your family's situation. This can be difficult but it is the first step in helping.

Think of a situation where your child has been in danger from a violent incident. What would you have liked him or her to know and do? Some examples would be:

- Call my sister to get help
- Go to a safe place in the house
- Call 911

When you make a safety plan with your children, think about what your child is actually able to do and what would be the safest option. A three-year-old can't walk two blocks to a friend's house. A five-year-old might have trouble staying in his room for three hours. Calling 911 may not be the safest option for some children who are worried about getting in trouble by the abusive parent. The plan should be age-appropriate and based on the strengths of your children. Talking with an advocate who works specifically with children can be beneficial to get specific tips or suggestions about what may fit for your family.

Domestic Violence Programs

Services may include counseling, advocacy, legal advocacy, services for children and teens, shelters, and support groups.



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAMS

- Abused Deaf Women's Advocacy Services (ADWAS):** www.adwas.org
24 Hrs.206-236-3134 (TTY)
- Broadview Emergency Shelter & Transitional Housing Program for Women with Children (Seattle):** 24 Hrs.
.....206-299-2500 or 1-877-622-3122
- Domestic Abuse Women's Network (DAWN):** South King County
24 Hrs.425-656-7867
- LifeWire (formerly EDVP):** Eastside
24 Hrs.425-746-1940 or 1-800-827-8840
- New Beginnings:** Seattle & Shoreline 24 Hrs.206-522-9472
- Salvation Army Domestic Violence Programs:** Seattle
24 Hrs.206-324-4943
- Washington State Domestic Violence Hotline:** Domestic Violence
Referrals Statewide 24 Hrs.1-800-562-6025
- DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAMS
- Asian Counseling and Referral Service:** www.acrs.org
.....206-695-7600
- APIChaya:** Asian, South Asian and Pacific Islander survivors
www.apichaya.org206-325-0325
- Consejo Counseling and Referral Service, Domestic Violence Services**
(se habla Español): www.consejocounseling.org
.....206-461-4880 or 1-888-847-7205
- DoVE Project:** Vashon Island www.vashondoveproject.org206-462-0911
- Jewish Family Service – Project DVORA:** www.jfsseattle.org
.....206-461-3240
- Korean Community Services:**206-784-5691

Services for Parents and Children

Community Information and Referral Telephone Numbers and Websites

Alcohol and Drug Help Line: www.adhl.org 24 Hrs. 206-722-3700

Child Protective Services: To report child abuse or neglect 24 Hrs.
..... 1-866-END-HARM or 1-866-363-4276

Childhaven: [www. Childhaven.org](http://www.Childhaven.org) 206-624-6477

Children's Hospital Medical Information Resource Line:
(Staffed by Nurses) 24 Hrs. 206-987-2500

Community Health Access Program:
www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/personal/insurance.aspx
Referrals to affordable medical/dental providers, counseling, mental health care, medical insurance, child development, prenatal care, WIC and other services (Interpreters & TTY available)
..... 206-284-0331 or 1-800-756-KIDS (5437)

Community Information Line:
Refers to variety of help resources & services..... 211 or 206-461-3200

Crisis Clinic: Crisis support & referral 24 Hrs
..... 206-461-3222 or 1-866-4-CRISIS

Family Help Line/Parent Trust: bi-lingual in Spanish www.parenttrust.org
Recorded parenting information & resources .. 1-800-932-HOPE(4673)

Harborview Center for Sexual Assault and Traumatic Stress:
Crisis support for DV trauma and sex assault 24 Hrs..... 206-744-1600

King County Sexual Assault Resource Center: Crisis support for DV trauma and sex assault 24 Hrs. 1-888-998-6423

NAVOS Mental Health Solutions: www.navos.org 206-933-7142

Parent Help 1-2-3: DSHS program and assistance info
www.parenthelp123.org 1-800-322-2588

Sound Mental Health: Therapeutic services 206-302-2300

Sound Mental Health/Children's Domestic Violence Response Team (CDVRT): Auburn.....253-876-7600 Tukwila..... 206-444-7800

Washington Health Plan Finder: www.wahealthplanfinder.org

Wellspring Family Services Domestic Violence Intervention Program "DV Dads" program: 206-826-3044

Steps for Safety Planning With Children When Violence Takes Place at Home

- Think of a person or people who could help and ask your children if they would feel comfortable reaching out to them for help.
- Give your children time to come up with their own solutions.
- Focus on what your children think they could do to keep themselves safe.
- Remember that safety plans need to change over time based on what is happening within the family (i.e. you moved)

Children should know that:

- The safety plan may not always work.
- It's not their fault if it fails.

Help Your Child to Identify Warning Signs

First, think about what are the warning signs (if any) that you have when your partner is about to become abusive. Talk with your child about these warning signs. They might include times when you and your partner are arguing, raising your voices, name-calling or threatening. In talking to your child about his or her abusive parent, always stay focused on behaviors. You could say something like, "Sometimes your dad acts in ways that are scary, and when he does, we need to do things to try to stay safe."

What Kids Can Do to Stay Safe

They can:

- Go to their room, or another room that is away from the abuse
- Leave the house and go somewhere safe: a neighbor's house, a relative's house, or outside
- Stay out of the way; get as far away from the violence as possible.
- Dial 911 if there is a phone that's in a safe place
- Don't ever try to physically stop the violence

Tell your child that he or she can't control the abusive person's behavior. Your child can only control his or her own behavior when something unsafe occurs.

SAFETY PLAN FOR _____

This page is for non-abusive parents and kids to talk about together, and for kids to fill out with their parent's help if they need it.

Who do I trust who can help me be safe when there is violence in our home? *(Neighbor, relative)*

Name: _____

Phone numbers: _____

What plan should I make with that person *(Example: That person will call the police when I call to say there is a problem between my Mom and Dad, or they will let me come to their house)*

Where is a safe place for me to go when someone is acting in scary ways? *(Examples: our neighbor's house, a relative's house, etc.). (List names of people)*

If I can't leave, where is the safest place in the house for me to go? *(Example, my bedroom, the basement, the bathroom)*

If I can call 911, what should I say?

When to Get Counseling for Your Child

If you notice any of the reactions listed below in your children over a period of time, or if they have extreme behaviors, it may be necessary to seek counseling for them:

Some behaviors that indicate that your child may need professional counseling include:

- Withdrawing
- Bullying, threatening or intimidating others
- Initiating physical fights
- Using a weapon
- Being physically or emotionally cruel to people
- Being cruel to animals
- Deliberately destroying others' property
- Running away from home
- Intentionally hurting her/himself
- Having frequent nightmares for prolonged period
- Showing a sudden change in behavior/personality
- Changes in eating/sleeping patterns
- Showing lack of interest in friends/school/etc.
- Grades change at school.



A list of resources for children is provided in the back of this booklet.

Helping Children Develop in Healthy Ways

Even though your children have been affected by domestic violence, they can recover and be emotionally healthy, especially if they receive encouragement and support in the following ways:

1. **Encourage your children:** Notice your children's positive qualities and let them know that you appreciate these.
2. **Set clear limits:** Set limits that are reasonable and appropriate to your children's ages, to help them feel valued and secure.
3. **Listen carefully:** Pay attention to what your children say, and let them know you hear what they are saying.
4. **Be affectionate:** Hug, kiss, pat, and smile at your children. Tell them you care for them.
5. **Allow them to solve problems:** Encourage your children to solve problems and make some decisions for themselves.
6. **Communicate respectfully:** Share your feelings, expectations and needs with your children in a way that is respectful.
7. **Promote independence:** Allow your children to play independently in a safe environment.
8. **Spend time with your kids:** Reading together, talking and listening, or playing together helps children feel cared for.
9. **Arrange for new activities in which your child can succeed:** Set up new activities for your children that they enjoy, like playing sports on a team, or taking music lessons, so that your children learn new skills and gain self-confidence.
10. **Be a positive, non-violent role model for your children:** Maintaining safe, reliable interactions with your children and their other parent can help them develop self-esteem.
11. **Let your children know they are capable:** Allow your children to have responsibilities and let them know you have confidence in them.
12. **Let your children know they are worthy of love just for who they are, and not related to their behavior:** Tell them you like them, enjoy them, and appreciate them, without relating it to their behavior.
13. **Give your children control in some aspect of their life:** Children can't control and abusive parents behavior and often feel as if they are powerless. Choosing a movie, dinner option or game can prevent some anxious behaviors.

Helping Our Kids When They Have Witnessed Domestic Violence (DV)

There are lots of things we can do to help children when they have witnessed DV. It is normal for people who have been in a violent relationship to not want to talk to their kids about it. It is difficult to realize that your children are aware of the violence and are impacted by it. It may seem like not talking about it will help them forget it happened. Not talking about the violence may cause kids to be more confused and scared.

Here's a list of ways to help kids when they have been in a home with DV:

- Acknowledge that the violence happened and that you know it was hard for them.
- Listen to them
- Talk about their feelings, if they want to
- Show understanding
- Let them know it's not their fault
- Let them know you love them
- Let them know the violence is not okay
- Acknowledge it's hard/scary for them
- Accept that they may not be willing or able to talk about it right away
- Attempt to act in a way that is non-threatening and non-violent with your kids
- Take them to counseling if they need it, with a person who is experienced in working with children who are exposed to domestic violence
- Set limits respectfully when your child is acting violent
- Understand that they may love their abusive parent even if they don't love their violent behaviors.

Why We Should Talk to Kids

When we don't talk to our kids about domestic violence, they make their own assumptions, and learn some negative lessons of what is supposed to happen in a relationship.

What Happens When No One Talks to Children about the DV

- Child learns that the violence is normal
- Child is afraid to talk about the violence
- Child is confused, doesn't understand
- Child blames her/himself
- Child learns to deny and not to talk about their own feelings
- Child learns that it's not OK to ask about the violence or discuss it
- Child may think the violence is his/her fault, or the victims fault

Talking about the violence prevents kids from thinking it's acceptable and normal to hurt the ones you love by trying to control them.

What Makes it Hard to Talk to your Kids About Domestic Violence?

It is not easy to talk to your children about the violence. Some parents say:

- I'm scared to bring it up.
- I'm afraid I'll make things worse.
- It's over now, why talk about it.
- I don't want them to hate their Dad/Mom.
- They didn't know it happened.
- They are too young to hear about it.
- They'll just be more scared.
- They'll tell other people.
- It can potentially put us in more danger.
- If my kids talk to others about it, they will judge us.

It helps if you can:

- Know that safety is first and foremost for both you and your children.
- Be patient. Don't push it. Try another time if they don't want to talk/listen.
- Remember that you are helping them by talking about it; you are not making it worse.
- Talk about it at a time when you are both relaxed and won't be interrupted.
- Practice ways to talk about it with a friend you trust or a counselor.
- **Know that when you talk to your children about the violence you are helping them:**
 - feel safer
 - learn that violence isn't their fault
 - learn that violence is not the way to solve problems
 - feel cared for and understood
 - learn that it is OK to talk about their feelings

When you talk to your kids about the violence you might find out they have been more affected than you were aware of. It is not easy to hear about your children's bad feelings and fears. Most parents feel responsible and that they have not been a good parent. Remember that parents try to do the best they can do to help children recover.

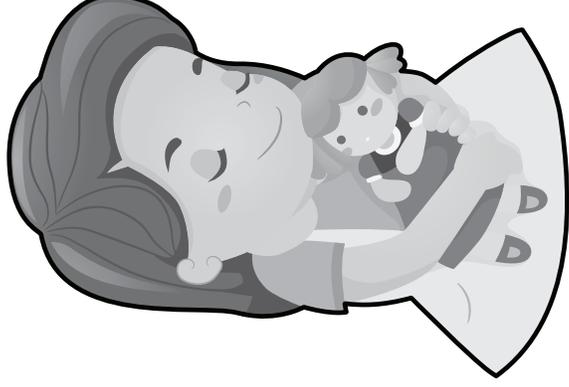
Children Learn from Their Parents' Behavior

As most parents notice, children learn and model behaviors of their parents, and of other people who are important to them. Parents have a strong influence on how their children behave. You can affect how your children behave by paying attention to your own behavior, and using behaviors you want your children to learn.

Children learn the behaviors they see, and are more likely to imitate these behaviors when they are rewarded for it. Imitation starts at an early age. Researchers (and parents) found that children can imitate behaviors beginning at birth (for example, sticking out their tongues). Infants can imitate simple adult sounds by 3 to 4 months of age.

Parents can teach children positive behaviors by:

- Being non-violent
- Expressing positive feelings with family members
- Talking out problems in a respectful way
- Respecting the needs and feelings of family members
- Telling others what you need in a respectful way
- Letting them know that abusive/violent behavior from others is not their fault
- They are in control of their choices and behavior



Children can also learn these behaviors by spending time with other adults who behave in these ways.