
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE INFORMATION SHEET
(For children)

WHAT?

* What is domestic violence?

Domestic violence is when grownups in a relationship (like parents or couples) try to control each other through:

1. Physically hurting
2. Threats/ Intimidation
3. Put downs
4. Cutting the person off from friends and family
5. Not taking responsibility for behavior
6. Using the kids
7. Not allowing the person to have money

* What do children who have witnessed violence experience?

1. Stomachaches
2. Headaches
3. Nightmares
4. Trouble eating
5. Trouble sleeping
6. Trouble with relationships
7. Jumpiness
8. Grumpiness (irritability)

* What is family court?

A place where some decisions about family problems or arguments are made.

* What is a judge?

A person who listens to people argue in court and then decides how to end the argument.

WHO?

* Who experiences domestic violence?

ALL KINDS OF PEOPLE- grownups and kids. Domestic violence doesn't discriminate by race, religion, gender, income or anything else. In 1994, according to the American Psychological Association Report on the Impact of Domestic Violence on Children, 3.3-10 million children witnessed domestic violence in the US.

* Who is violent?

All kinds of people. Sometimes it's moms but it's usually dads or moms' boyfriends. You can't tell by looking at someone if they are violent. Some people who are violent some of the time are nice and loveable at other times. Sometimes kids love the person who is violent and sometimes they hate the person or fear him. Sometimes they feel all different things. All of their feelings are OK.

WHY?

* Why does domestic violence happen?

There are lots of reasons. All of them have to do with the grownup that is being violent. It is NEVER the child's fault or the fault of the person who is being hurt. Some people think that alcohol and substance abuse cause domestic violence, but it is important to remember that violence is a CHOICE. If alcohol and drugs caused people to be violent, everyone who used them would be violent.

HOW?

* How can you tell if a person will be violent?

You can't tell by looking at a person if they are going to be violent. BUT, if a person has hit once in a relationship, they are likely to do it again. The best predictor of how a person will act in the future is how they have acted in the past unless they have gotten help to change the behavior.

* How do children who have witnessed violence act?

When kids have seen a lot of violence, their brains get trained to respond fast to things that seem like they might be dangerous. That is your brain's way of keeping you safe. In lots of kids, that means they get mad really easily because getting mad helps us move fast and fight to protect ourselves. Other kids freeze up because being very quiet and still is another way to protect ourselves. Other kids run away to protect themselves. When kids have experienced lots of violence, they respond by fighting, freezing or running away automatically to any feeling of danger (DeBellis, 1994).

Infants may have problems sleeping and eating (Jaffe, 1990) and can have problems with their relationships with their parents because they don't trust the world to be a safe place (Hanson and Spratt). They can even develop Failure to Thrive, where they don't grow ("Domestic Violence and Child Welfare Training" NCACDSS, 2004).

Older children might:

- get in fights.
- have problems with teachers.
- not want to go to school.
- not want to go home.
- have a hard time concentrating.
- bully other kids.
- get bullied by other kids and not have friends (Jaffe, 1990).
- pick on or beat up younger brothers and sisters.
- be mean to animals.
- use drugs or alcohol.
- run away.
- hurt themselves.
- try to act like the parent (Jaffe, 1990).

* How do children who have witnessed violence feel?

They might feel guilty, like they caused it.

They might feel mad at the person doing the abusing or the person getting abused.

They might feel like they can't trust any adults.

They might feel confused because they feel anger and love and fear and respect of the same person at the same time.

They might feel worried about when it will happen again.

WHERE?

* Where should you go for help?

Counselors, teachers, social workers doctors and police are some good people you can talk to. It is important to tell an adult when you are seeing domestic violence. Talking will help you feel better after a while.