

## HELPING CHILDREN DEVELOP IN HEALTHY WAYS

Even though your children may 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. **Set routines and structure:** Children thrive in structured homes, where there is set meal times, play times and bed times. It helps them feel safe and secure.
4. **Listen carefully:** Pay attention to what your children say, and let them know you hear what they are saying.
5. **Be affectionate:** Hug, kiss, pat, and smile at your children. Tell them you care for them.
6. **Allow them to solve problems:** Encourage your children to solve problems and make some decisions for themselves.
7. **Communicate respectfully:** Share your feelings, expectations and needs with your children in a way that is respectful.
8. **Promote independence:** Allow your children to play independently in a safe environment.
9. **Spend time with your kids:** Reading together, talking and listening, or playing together helps children feel cared for.
10. **Arrange for new activities in which your child can succeed:** Set up new activities for your children that they enjoy, like playing on a sports team, or taking music lessons, so that your children learn new skills and gain self-confidence.
11. **Be a positive, non-violent role model for your children:** Maintaining safe, reliable interactions with your children can help them develop self-esteem.
12. **Let your children know they are capable:** Allow your children to have responsibilities and let them know you have confidence in them.
13. **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.

Often you may see an increase acting out or misbehavior after you are separated from your partner.

Throwing tantrums or having "fits" are a natural emotional healing process in children. Crying, especially loud sobbing with lots of tears, is a form of release and healing for feelings of grief or fear.

While this may be overwhelming, take pride in the fact that you have created a safe environment for your children to finally have the freedom to express all their emotions, both good and bad.

### **How to Assist Children in Releasing Painful Emotions**

- Offer loving attention and name what the child is feeling.
- Keep child safe – away from hazards. Hold the child if it helps them feel more secure.
- Express love, and let them see you are not afraid.
- Do not permit child to break things, throw things or hit anyone. Provide safe items to hit or kick such a pillow.
- Allow tantrum to go on until it ends by itself.
- Lovingly refuse to give into demands.
- Children may cry after the source of distress has passed because it is only them that they are safe to release the fear.