

IMPACTS OF ABUSER BEHAVIOR ON CHILDREN

Even if the child has not directly witnessed abuse, almost all children know that the violence is going on in their home and are affected by it in some way.

There are lots of things we can do to help children when they have witnessed domestic violence. 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. But not talking about the violence often causes kids to be more confused and scared.

How to Talk to Kids about Domestic Violence:

- ♦ Be patient. Don't push it. Try another time if they don't want to talk/listen.
- ♦ Talk about it at a time when you are both relaxed and won't be interrupted.
- ♦ Remember that you are helping them by talking about it; you are not making it worse.

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 you are doing the best thing you can do right now to help them recover.

Know that when you talk to your children about the violence you are helping them to:

- ♦ 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.

It is a lot scarier for kids when no one ever talks to them about the violence.

Resiliency

Most children are very resilient, meaning they can recover naturally with help from their mother and from other supportive, non-violent people in their lives, rather than professionals.

When to Get Counseling for Your Child

If you notice any of the reactions listed below in your children lasting for an extended period of time without improvement, or if they have extreme changes in behavior, it may be necessary to seek counseling for them:

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