

DV: SOS (Support on Site) / CASA of NJ Informational Handout

Effects of Domestic Violence on Children

What is domestic violence or abuse?

Domestic violence or abuse is a **pattern of behavior** where one person in an intimate relationship gains and maintains **power and control** over their partner by instilling a fear of consequences through the use of intimidating and manipulating tactics.

- It is **NOT** about having a fierce argument once in a while or a bad mood after a bad day.
- Abusive relationships are rarely physically abusive in the beginning.

Children Are Impacted by DV

- Domestic violence or abuse is a pattern of behavior where one person in an intimate relationship gains and maintains power and control over their partner by instilling a fear of consequences using intimidating and manipulating tactics.
- FACT: One out of four women (and one out of three teenage girls) is a victim of intimate partner abuse.
- FACT: One out of 14 men experience intimate partner violence.
- FACT: 1 billion children globally are exposed to domestic violence in their home.
- FACT: 1 in 7 children experience childhood exposure to domestic violence. (Childhood Domestic Violence Association)

Child Exposure to Domestic Violence

- Children of mothers who experience prenatal physical domestic violence are at an increased risk of exhibiting aggressive, anxious, depressed, or hyperactive behavior.
- Two out of three children are exposed to trauma and violence.
- Children who experience childhood trauma, including witnessing incidents of domestic violence, are at a greater risk of having serious adult health problems including tobacco use, substance abuse, obesity, cancer, heart disease, depression, and a higher risk for unintended pregnancy.
- When properly identified and addressed, the effects of domestic violence on children can be mitigated.

Information from Futures Without Violence

Notes:

Impact of abuse on children

- A 2001 study done in New York State revealed that of the young men (18-24) incarcerated for murder, 63% of them had killed _____ (who do you think?).
- Children are at increased risk of being abused and neglected when domestic violence is present: More than half of all men who beat their intimate partners deliberately harm or abuse the children (some studies are as high as 70%).
- Men who as children witnessed their parents' domestic violence were twice as likely to abuse their own wives than sons of nonviolent parents.
- Child abuse is a predictor of domestic violence:
 - In about 55% of child abuse cases, domestic violence in the home was revealed.
 - Children who grow up in a family where there is abuse of a parent are 50% more likely to be physically abused themselves.

Notes:

How children figure into the dynamic

The context of domestic violence is the single most important context in which child abuse occurs :

- As the violence toward the female partner increases in severity and/or frequency, children experience a 300% increase in physical abuse by the male parent.
- Female children are 6.5 times greater risk of sexual abuse by a battering father than female children by a non-battering father.
- In NJ, 35% to 50% of the children from a shelter sample scored within the "clinical range" suggesting the need for therapeutic services.

Lundy Bancroft, Court Review

Notes:

Points to Consider

- Many children are resilient. If battered parent is resilient, the impact on child is buffered.
- Many batterers often have no regard for the safety of the child while coercing/assaulting the adult victim.
- The risk of child sexual abuse increases during separation/divorce proceedings (false reports occur only 2% of the time).
- Child abuse, youth violence and domestic violence are inextricably interwoven. The presence of domestic violence in a child's life not only hurts the child, but it has also far-reaching effects on all of society.
- Early intervention is paramount.

Notes:

Impact of DV on Children's Emotions

- **Fearful: uncertain, timid, lacking true confidence.**
 - Confident: they know real fear and have confidence to face anything.
- **Guilty: It was my fault.**
 - A child is never responsible for the actions of adults.
- **Angry: Prone to violence and frequent frustration.**
 - Passionate: take control of angry energy and put it towards something positive.
- **Hopeless: Good things don't happen to people like me.**
 - Show them they can have purpose.
- **Sad: hurt, feeling a sense of loss.**
 - Help them to be grateful by focusing on what they have and gained.
- **Resentful: I am bitter, no real compassion for others.**
 - Teach compassion from their understanding of what pain feels like.
- **Worthless: I'm not good enough.**
 - Teach accomplishment through realization of what they have overcome.
- **Alone: I can't talk to anyone about this and feel disconnected.**
 - Discuss trust in that the intent of others intent is positive and supportive of them.
- **Unlovable: I don't understand what love is and I don't deserve it.**
 - Talk about being loved; show them that feelings of care/appreciation of others makes them feel same.

Notes:

Characteristics of Batterer as Parent

- Authoritarian and irresponsible.
- Self-centered and narcissistic.
- Manipulative (family and helpers).
- Undermines their partner's authority.
- Able to perform well under observation.
- Many of the coercive and controlling behaviors are not recognized by statute as criminal child abuse and neglect.
- The challenge to helpers: referral to support systems beyond child protective services must be identified and offered.

Notes:

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Household climate created by batterer's behavior

- Creates a climate dominated by isolation, intimidation, and threats/acts of violence.
- Fear, Terror and Secrecy.
- Batterer models behavior to children that includes domination/threats and force, blaming others rather than taking responsibility, and suppressing conflict, which results in children blaming themselves.
- Batterer gives severe consequences for demonstration of independence, autonomy, self-motivated acts.
- Rigid set of “Family Rules”.
- Safety & Survival are the primary goals of family members.

Notes:

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The adult victim as parent

- May be attentive and protective of the children.
- May attempt to use humor/explanations about the batterer's control.
- May be neglectful if they are unconscious or disabled from a beating, in physical pain, in shock, depressed, or restrained.
- May be overly controlling to avoid the batterers wrath about their "failure" to control the kids.
- May take on administering punishments in order to protect kids from the batterer's wrath.
- May be abusive in their own right (less likely).
- May use drugs/alcohol to cope or self-medicate from physical pain.

Notes:

Helping a Child Gain Power

- Many are experiencing loss – of family unity, of residence, of school, friends, pets, possessions, single-parent home etc.
- Help them develop affirmations: "I am not to blame"; "I deserve to have a safe home", "I am not alone"; "I can ask someone to help me."
- Use art, music, drama, and play to help children express themselves.
- Discuss their fears.
- Separate batterer from the violent behavior – it's OK to love the abuser but hate the abuser's behavior.
- Find ways to give them back some power, i.e., safety planning.

Benefits to kids who talk about it

- They feel safer.
- They learn that the violence isn't their fault.
- They learn that violence isn't an appropriate way to solve problems.
- They feel cared for and understood.
- They learn that it's OK to talk about feelings.
- They learn that they're not alone and that it happens to other families/kids, as well.

Notes:

Resources & Safety Planning Information is in the DV-SOS Brochure