

Kids and Domestic Violence

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Synopsis

With sayings like “children should be seen and not heard” so prevalent and acceptable in our society, it is no wonder that the voices of children are consistently silenced and their stories ignored. The movement against domestic violence has made a conscious effort to fight against this attitude. Children are always affected when violence is happening in their homes, whether or not they are the primary targets. We think children *should* be seen and heard – and believed.

The information in this packet addresses topics ranging from possible impacts of domestic violence on children, tools for working with children and strategies to reinforce children's strengths and resiliency. The last portion of this reader is a copy of a packet we use at CWS with parents and caregivers of children who have witnessed/survived domestic violence.

YOUNG PEOPLE LIVING WITH FAMILY VIOLENCE

Scope and Effects

Between 3.3 and 10 million children in the United States are at risk of witnessing partner abuse. (Strauss 1991)

In 90% of domestic violence cases children are either in the same or next room when their mothers are being abused. (Hughes, 1998; Rosenberg & Rossman, 1990)

Exposing children to violence of one parent against another parent is one of the most severe forms of psychological abuse that can occur. (Silvern and Kaersvang, 1989;)

Multiple studies have found heightened emotional and behavioral distress among children who witness domestic violence. Some distressing effects include depression, anxiety, withdrawal, lowered self esteem, PTSD, aggression, suicidal tendencies, and psychosomatic symptoms like stomach aches, sleep disturbances, and stuttering.

Men who have seen their fathers abuse their mothers are 3 times more likely to hit their partners than those who have not. The sons of the most violent fathers may be 1000 times more likely to abuse their partners than sons of non violent fathers. (Stark & Flitcraft, 1985)

45% of assaults on women are accompanied by physical assaults on a child of the family. (Roy 1979) 50-75% of men who batter their female partners also abuse their children. (Walker et al., 1982) These studies alert us to the prevalence of child abuse in homes where family violence occurs. Serious child abuse almost always postdates incidents of partner abuse.

Children may also receive injuries indirectly when items are thrown or when they are being held by their mothers during the abuse. Older children may receive injuries when they are trying to protect their siblings or mothers. (Hilberman and Munson 1977-78)

More than 40 children are abducted by a parent each hour in the US. More than half of these abductions occur in the context of domestic violence. (Grief and Hegar, 1992) Custodial interference is one of the few battering tactics available to an abuser after separation and it is used extensively.

Mothers who are battered may be more likely to physically abuse their children than are non-battered women. When women are able to achieve safety, the incidence of physical abuse decreases. (Walker, 1984; Roy, 1977; Gayford, 1975)

CHILDREN OF BATTERED WOMEN: THE IMPACT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

	EMOTION	COGNITION	BEHAVIOR
<p>PRESCHOOL</p> <p>These children are the most helpless, and vulnerable, and have the fewest cognitive and behavioral resources for coping. Their reactions may be immediately disruptive to their daily routines.</p>	<p>Panic, anxiety, anxious attachment to both parents, separation anxiety, numbing of emotions, irritability</p>	<p>Short-term memory for events Limited understanding of violence Concerns about disruption of routines Wants family reunited</p>	<p>Crying, whining, tantrums, withdrawal, passivity, loss of developmental skills (incontinence, self-care), muteness, unresponsive, nightmares, sleep disturbances</p>
<p>SCHOOL AGE</p> <p>These children have a broader range of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral skills for coping with traumatic events. They make more active attempts to intervene in the violence, to protect the victim, and to assign meaning to the stressful events. As a result, they are more likely than younger children to experience guilt, shame, ambivalence towards parents, and persistent evidence of depression.</p>	<p>Depression, sadness, worrying, guilt, shame, feels responsible and also helpless to intervene, anxious, hypersensitive to danger cues, distrust of adults, ambivalent feelings toward violent parent (both attachment and doubt)</p>	<p>Concentration and memory deficits Intrusive thoughts and images of violence Fantasies of rescuing victims or family Attempts to understand violence Ambivalence about family separation</p>	<p>Declining school performance Inhibited, passive social behavior Psychosomatic complaints (Stomachache, headaches, etc.) Aggression, cruelty to others Defiance/disobedience Destructive of property Reenactment of trauma through talk and play Disturbed relationship with peers</p>
<p>ADOLESCENCE</p> <p>The repeated exposure to intolerable family conflict and violence tends to alienate adolescents from their family and self-identification. As a result, adolescents may leave home at an early age, and engage in a variety of antisocial and self-destructive behaviors. Ambivalence may be resolved through favoring toward one parent.</p>	<p>Self-blame, guilt, shame, suicidal ideation, anger, rage, explosive feelings, ambivalent allegiance to one parent, depression, hopelessness, lack of empathy for others, suspicion and distrust of adults.</p>	<p>Intrusive thoughts and images of violence Concentration and memory deficits Confusion of love with violence Belief that assault is normal Blame others for own behavior</p>	<p>Declining school performance Truancy Running away from home Increased sexual activity Substance abuse Antisocial behavior, delinquency Uncooperative with adults Explosive and violent interpersonal behavior Violence and abuse in dating relationships</p>

Children of Battered Women: Strengths & Resiliency

Strengths/ Resiliency Factors	Examples of Children Coping with Domestic Violence	Strategies for Reinforcing & Redirecting Strengths
<p>Insight: Ability to question the distorted images of the family.</p>	<p>Sensing "there's something wrong here" In adolescence, putting words to it, naming the problem</p>	<p>Ask "how did you figure this out?" Validate their ability to name the problem & listen to their gut feelings</p>
<p>Relationship/Social Competency: Connecting with others. Empathy. Caring. Communication skills.</p>	<p>Actively seeks out people to connect with, including those outside the family. Seeks out a counselor/other to talk about the problem & feelings. Talks to peers about about problem. Protects younger siblings, seeks to protect mom, concern for victim's or batterer's feelings</p>	<p>Reinforce impulse to seek help. Practice communication skills. Validate/redirect empathy – "it sounds like you really care your mom. Let's try to think of a safer way to help her" or "it's okay to love your Dad, but you and Mom need to be safe."</p>
<p>Autonomy: Independence. Initiative. Exploration. Real sense of who they are. Ability to act independently.</p>	<p>Talent to distance oneself from family; finds a safe place away from the violence. Decides "it's okay to be different from the family" (defy family patterns & roles). Able to take risks within the family to make aspects of life controllable. Figures out when Dad might explode, then gets self & siblings out of it. tries to intervene. Calls 911. Runs away.</p>	<p>"You were brave to protect your sisters." "You're good at figuring out when Dad might get mad." "Finding a safe place was important." "That was brave to try to protect your Mom, but I'm worried that you might get hurt, too. What's another way you could get help for Mom?" " You really didn't want to be around the fighting anymore, but running away from home doesn't make you safe. What else can you do?"</p>
<p>Problem-Solving: Thinking abstractly. Finding alternative solutions to problems. Ability to plan. Resourcefulness.</p>	<p>Developing multiple options for coping. Safety planning. Fantasy planning. Knowing how to make use of resources, ask for and get help. Calling 911. Talking to someone at school.</p>	<p>Teach safety planning. Allow children to explore options and make their own informed choices. With fantasy, validate the planning aspect. "it sounds like you put a lot of thought and planning into that idea."</p>
<p>Sense of Purpose/Hope: Having goals. Having a sense of her/his own future</p>	<p>"I'm not gonna get married when I grow up." "I'm not gonna do that to my kids." "Do you think I'll be like that when I grow up?" "When I'm bigger, I'll protect my mom."</p>	<p>Hear / Honor child's story without despair. Express your hope in their future. Validate their impulse to think about a future, even if the plans seem inappropriate.</p>
<p>Creativity & Humor:</p>	<p>Acting out / channeling the pain in play, drama, writing, etc. Fantasy.</p>	<p>Give children room for self-expression without censorship. Ask open-ended questions, provide avenues for creativity.</p>

Resiliency: the ability to successfully engage in stress rather than avoiding it. Strength and the potential for resiliency are always there. Trauma comes in and out of children's lives and sometimes overshadows their strengths.

ABUSERS AS PARENTS

Many batterers physically or sexually abuse their children. In addition, children living in a violent home, even if they are not being hit, are abused because they are forced to witness violence. Some abusers do treat their children well, but their children are often still confused and scared because they witness the abuse of their mother. The following is a list of some ways batterers have acted towards women and children:

PHYSICAL ABUSE

- Hurts mom in front of kids, including sexual abuse
- Hurts mom so she can't caretake
- Hurts kids (hits, kicks, pushes, pulls, throws items) during abuse of mom
- Neglects the children, does not cook or clean
- Puts kids in middle, physically or emotionally
- Allows access to kids by unsafe people - especially if pimping, dealing, or using
- Has weapons
- Threatens to kill or hurt mom, kids, or pets
- Hurts or kills pets
- Abuses mother while pregnant, may cause miscarriage or injury to fetus
- Puts kids in dangerous situations (drives recklessly, breaks glass during fights, forces homelessness)
- Pimps mom
- Does not allow kids or mom access to services or necessities like school, medical treatment, counseling, diapers

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

- Isolates kids (move often, no phone, no activities, drunk or violent when friends come over)
- Belittles kids
 - sets unrealistic, inconsistent, or developmentally inappropriate expectations for kids
- Changes the rules frequently, and rules by fear
- Blames kids and uses kids' behavior as an excuse to batter
- Makes and goes back on promises
- Destroys favorite objects of children or mom
- Punishes children for telling "family secrets"

ABUSE OF MOM

- Isolates mom, which leads to a lack of the support every parent needs, among other things
- Puts down mom to undermine children's respect for her as parent
- Convinces her she's a bad mom
- Expects mom to "parent" abuser
- Shows concern for kids during fight but no concern for mom
- Shows no concern for children during fight
- Interferes with mom's relationships or bonding with children
- Contradicts mom's rules
- Exhausts mom
- Blames mom and instills blame of mom in kids
- Uses kids to get at mom (custody fights, kidnapping)
- Requires mom to parent abuser's way, sabotages her attempts to use her own style (often more violent discipline than she would like)

Adapted from Bradley-Angle House literature



Clackamas Women's Services

Crisis Line (503) 654-2288, Outreach Office (503) 722-2366, P.O. Box 22547, Milwaukie, OR 97269

Effects of domestic violence on battered women's parenting abilities

Many survivors of domestic violence are excellent parents, and most are motivated by concern for their children. However, some survivors' parenting may be negative or even abusive. While each woman must take responsibility for her own abusive behavior, *it is important to examine how such behavior may be a response to domestic violence*-or even a coping skill that has kept herself and the children more safe at this point. Many of the following disappear when the mother and children find safety, stability, and support.

- Does not bond with children
- Denies and minimizes domestic violence
- Denies and minimizes abuse of children by batterer or his friends and family
- Denies children are aware of domestic violence
- Blames children for abuse
- Disciplines harshly or violently
- Seems incapable of saying "no" or following through
- Is inconsistent with children and service providers
- Does not allow children to explore or disagree
- Has unrealistic expectations of children
- Neglects her share of the housekeeping
- Prevents access to children by service providers
- Allows access to children by unsafe people
- Covers for abuser
- Seems to take the abuser's side rather than the children's
- Seems unable to permanently leave the abuser

Teri Pierson 2000

CHILDREN'S MISBEHAVIOR

Why Children "Misbehave":

A. Physical Reasons -

1. They may be hungry.
2. They may be tired.
3. They may not feel well.
4. They may have LOTS of energy.
5. They may not have the skills to do what they would like to do.

B. Emotional Reasons -

1. They may feel frustrated and angry but don't know how to deal with those feelings appropriately.
2. They may feel ignored, left out, taken for granted.
3. They may feel unimportant, inadequate, too young.
4. They may feel frightened and overwhelmed.

C. Intellectual Reasons -

1. They may be curious and want to know how things work.
2. They may test things to see how they will happen or what will happen.

D. Social Reasons -

1. Others respond by laughing at them or paying more attention to them when they are acting out.
2. There may be pressure and/or encouragement from others.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

A. Physical support - Be aware of your child's physical condition. Children need plenty of sleep, some quiet times, regular check-ups by a nurse or physician, well-balanced meals, nutritious snacks if they are hungry between meals, opportunities for vigorous physical activities, time to play, AND your patience as they learn new skills.

B. Emotional Support - Listen and help your children learn to talk about their feelings, and help them find acceptable ways to deal with feelings. Tell your children that it is OK to be angry.

Give them a safe space and safe activities for them to do to get their anger out (like punching pillows, yelling into their pillows, etc.). Let them know what things are not OK to do with anger (such as: hitting, slamming doors, throwing things at others, etc.). Give your children some of your time, your physical affection and attention each day. Encourage your children by helping them know what they do well. Help them to see that they are getting better at many things.

Help them find things to do that are age and developmentally appropriate for them. Let your children know that you love them (even when you do not like what they have done / are doing).

Issues Needing To Be Addressed With Kids Who Have Experienced Domestic Violence

A. Labeling feelings - conflicting emotions cause confusion, need opportunities to discuss fear, anger, sadness. Validate.

B. Dealing with anger - anger is OK, violence is not

C. Safety planning- kids spend a lot of time worrying about future episodes- work on planning to protect themselves, help establish an appropriate plan to help mom.

D. Social support - help create a support system, break isolation (school, friends, support group)

E. Social competence and self concept- children need to be encouraged to identify areas of strength, competence, and ways to feel better about themselves. Living with violence produces guilt, shame and changes in school performance (self esteem is undermined by violence)

F. Responsibility for parent violence- children need to know that the violence is not their fault, that mom's safety should be a community effort

G. Understanding family violence- undoing myths around whose fault the violence is, drug and alcohol issues and abuser behavior, etc.

H. Wishes about the family- support a child's desire for a different way of living

I. Accurate information around gender roles- children need unbiased information about gender as it supports their self esteem and sense of self expectation

Information compiled by Kiersten Beigel from the Volunteers of America Family Center, Portland, OR. using Peter G. Jaffe, David A. Wolfe and Susan Kaye Wilson, Children of Battered Women. (Sage Publications, Inc., California, 1990), pp. 87-88. This information is based partly on a model by Alessi and Hearn (1984), New York.

ADJUSTMENT TO SHELTER

Coming to an emergency shelter appears to be a very positive step for a family. Even when the long-term effects are positive, the transition carries with it a lot of repercussions for the children.

What a shelter stay can mean to a child:

- Unfamiliar foods
- Surrounded by strangers
- New (scary) surroundings
- Loss of personal space
- Loss of personal comfort/security items
- Fear of the unknown
- Loss of daily routine- new routine imposed on them by shelter
- New school or longer commute to school (with safety risks)
- Loss of daily contact with peers
- Absence of siblings, support people not brought to shelter
- Adjustment to personalities of others in the house
- Exposure to cultures, lifestyles, practices they may be unfamiliar with or afraid of
- Need to establish new (transitory) relationships
- Child often learns that a place to live is a privilege rather than a surety
- Shelter-imposed rules govern every aspect of life while in shelter
- Daily structure varies, with workers getting days off, sick days, etc.
- Children must stay with, and be supervised by, mom
- May not answer doors or phones
- May not know why they are there
- May be sure the abuser will find them
- May be sure they will go back
- May be relieved and less fearful
- May feel safer
- Routines and predictability may be new for them, and helpful to them
- There are people to talk to- but the child may not know what is safe to discuss
- Fun activities to do
- Chance to play- to be "a child"
- No hitting, yelling in shelter (this is sometimes a promise that is not fulfilled)
- Older children often have some of their sibling-care behaviors curtailed
- School is set up for children in transition, with peers in similar circumstances
- Access to food is consistent
- Mom may develop more positive guidance skills
- Child may feel as if he/she has deserted father
- Child may be unable to picture a more positive future, so is experiencing all this without a clue as to why

Susan Smith, Raphael House of Portland 1996

TOOLS FOR WORKING WITH KIDS

GIVE POSITIVE ATTENTION: Positive attention can help in creating a safe and secure atmosphere. Notice and praise effort, not just success.

USE POSITIVE PHRASING: Telling a child what he/she *may* do gets more positive results than simply saying 'don't'. ("Drive cars on the floor" instead of "Don't throw cars!") Save 'no!', 'stop!' and 'don't!' for emergencies.

USE SIMPLE LANGUAGE: Sometimes less is more; clear, simple and direct statements can be most effective to get across important or non-negotiable points. Speak in a quiet, calm, kind voice. Avoid turning a statement into a question ("We're going to clean up now, ok?" causes problems because you appear to be offering a choice when, in fact, you are giving information).

USE HUMOR OR DRAMA: Age-appropriate use of humor can shift the tone and atmosphere of the environment.

SET LIMITS: This means providing structure. Kids will know what is expected of them and will feel safer as a result. Set limits that are logical to each situation. Limits are not to be used as threats.

ALLOW TIME FOR TRANSITIONS: Children can become confused when rushed and may be reluctant to stop a fun activity for a less interesting one.

KEEP A 'WHOLE ROOM' VIEW: When working with groups of children, frequently scan the room or yard with your eyes and ears so that you can be alert to impending danger or conflict and head off problems before they arise.

MODEL: Children learn by watching the world around them. Show the desired behavior by doing it in front of them. Your own actions can affect the child's subsequent behavior.

ENCOURAGE EXPERIMENTATION: Children can learn much and feel empowered when they have opportunities for trial and error. Ask a child if he/she wants help before jumping in with the right puzzle piece or 'fixing' a tippy pile of blocks.

WORK TOGETHER TO FIND SOLUTIONS: Group problem-solving, compromise, teamwork and cooperation are all skills children need opportunities to practice. Ask, "What ideas do you have for working this out?" "What did you do that worked last time this happened?" Mediate so that all voices are heard.

OFFER CHOICES: Offer a realistic choice to the child. ("It's time to clean up. Would you like to pick up the blocks or the musical instruments?") Only offer a choice when the child has realistic options. Choices should not be used to manipulate ("you can be nice or leave the playroom"), but to involve and empower the child.

REDIRECT: Move a child away from the place or situation. Get him/her interested in another activity, toy and/or location.

RESTATE LIMITS AND FOLLOW THROUGH: Remind child of rules and limits; follow through with appropriate response if child chooses to ignore the rules and limits already set.

ALLOW CHILDREN TIME TO RESOLVE CONFLICTS ON THEIR OWN: Listen for a moment before stepping in with a solution to children's problems. As long as both participants seem to be getting their needs met, and no one is being insulted or hurt your help may not be needed.

IGNORE LESS-THAN-PERFECT BEHAVIOR: If behavior is not dangerous, threatening, or oppressive and if your ignoring does not contradict previously set limits, give yourself a break and just let it go.

NATURAL & LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES: Let child's actions play out if not dangerous, threatening, or oppressive - then point out outcome and offer other options for next time; or explain possible outcomes and effects of child's actions.

VALIDATE FEELINGS: Let child know her/his feelings are important, appropriate, and *always* worth expressing. Help children learn appropriate ways of expressing what they feel.

REFLECT FEELINGS / STATEMENTS: Tell the child that you have heard him/her. Reflect back what you heard or noticed without offering solutions. "You sound mad." "This seems hard for you." "You seem excited about that."

ACTIVELY LISTEN: Listen to feelings, watch body language, ask questions to understand the whole situation.

EXPRESS YOUR OWN FEELINGS ABOUT SITUATION: "It hurts my feeling when you say that", or "I'm feeling frustrated with how loud it is in here." or "I'm worried that you'll fall when you're hanging off the edge of the slide like that."

SUPPORT A CHILD'S OWNERSHIP OF HER/HIS BODY: Even positive touches should be given only when asked for. Even very young babies should be asked if they want to be picked up. If you must touch a child to move him or her out of danger, say "I'm moving you over here" or "I need to help you move your body."

TAKE A TIME OUT FOR YOURSELF: Feeling overwhelmed, overloaded? It can be great modeling for kids to see grown-ups take a "time-out" to calm themselves.

HELP CHILDREN CALM DOWN: Breathing, counting, singing, imagining and peaceful place, taking a walk around the playground ... all ways that an adult can encourage a child to calm their bodies down (for example, when active playtime is coming to an end, before bedtime, when you notice a child getting frustrated or angry.) Take deep breaths to keep yourself calm, and use a quiet voice.

SOME THINGS TO AVOID WHEN WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND THEIR PARENTS

1. Never discuss a child's behavior or appearance in her/his presence within her/his hearing.
2. Never tease a child.
3. Never ridicule or in any way humiliate a child. Laugh with a child, but never at the child.
4. Never raise your voice in anger, and never handle a child roughly.
5. Never frighten a child.
6. Never deceive a child. Never promise something which you cannot deliver.
7. Never show a preference for one child over another. Try to find the likable things in a child who may seem less attractive than others.
8. Do not offer a child a choice when you cannot grant a choice. Do not say, "Would you like to give me that sharp stick?" Try, "You may put the stick in the basket or on the table."
9. Never compare children. Do not say, "See how nicely Johnny builds with blocks." This will not teach the child to build, but it may make her dislike Johnny.
10. Never threaten or bribe a child.
11. Do not deny a child something and then give in because he creates a scene. Be very sure your denial is necessary before you make it, then stick to it.
12. Do not talk with a mom about her parenting in front of a child. Never ridicule a mom's parenting skills.

Tools to use to maintain appropriate boundaries

- State limits and expectations clearly from the start
- Don't touch people / ask before touching
- State your own body space
- Come up with alternate touching possibilities (high-five instead of hugging)
- Be familiar with, state, and follow shelter policy
- No contact with participants outside of agency
- Validate participants feelings (ie: it's okay to be sad that we won't see each other anymore)
- State what's happening (ie: "I noticed that you're having a hard time not touching me.")
- Ask questions about the issue ("Are you feeling like...")
- Don't give specific advise, but support the person in exploring a variety of options
- Don't rescue! Offer resources, listen, support.
- Work to EMPOWER, not ENABLE
- Don't show favoritism – include all kids, apply the same rules to all
- Limit self-disclosure
- Take care of yourself and state your own limits
- Maintain confidentiality
- Don't give or receive gifts
- Ask other staff people or volunteers if you're unsure about any boundary

Discipline – What is it?

Discipline starts with *LISTENING* to a child
Listening will help you understand their problems

Discipline is *RESPECTING* a child as an important,
contributing member of the group

Discipline is *SETTING BOUNDARIES*,
because children look to you for guidance

Discipline is *APPRECIATING* a child's accomplishments

Discipline is *PREVENTING PROBLEMS*
Forethought and careful planning can do wonders

Discipline is *PERMITTING* many worthwhile activities
Provide many things a child may do

Discipline is *BELIEVING* that a child is special,
with abilities and talents you can help develop

Discipline is *ACCEPTING* a child warmly,
showing that you enjoy your time together

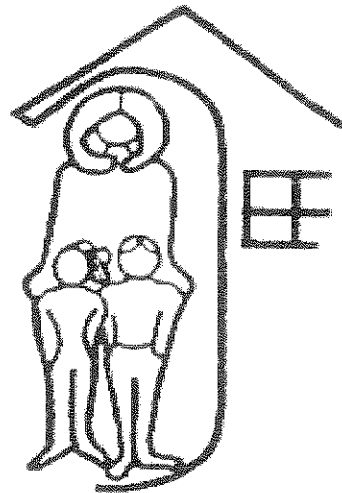
Discipline is fostering
MUTUAL RESPECT and DIGNITY

Tools to use for self-care

- Take breaks, even at the shelter!
- State your needs to staff, other volunteers and to kids
- Debrief with staff after a shift
- Don't over-commit yourself / pace yourself
- Maintain healthy boundaries
- Lead a healthy life (whatever that looks like for you)
- Identify safe support people in your life

Note: for more information on self care and vicarious trauma, see the **Effects of Trauma** reading packet

The Effects of Domestic Violence on Children



Clackamas Women's Services

Working to end domestic and sexual violence against women and children.

Crisis Line & Information

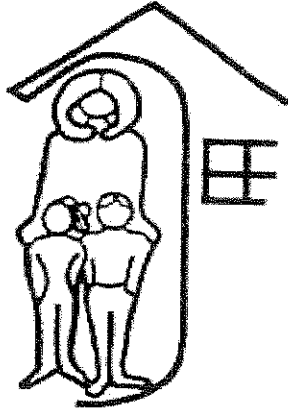
503-654-2288

Business Line: 503-722-2366

Clackamas Women's Services, P.O. Box 22547, Milwaukie, OR 97269

A Brief Introduction

This packet is meant to help parents and caregivers understand some of the effects that domestic violence (DV) can have on children, how to support youth who have experienced or witnessed DV, and provide some resources for getting support.



Children respond to domestic violence in many different ways. The effects that are listed in this packet represent some of the reactions a child might have. Some children will experience many of these feelings and behaviors and others will experience very little. Each child and situation is different and it is important to know that there is no “abnormal” reaction to domestic violence and no one “right” way of dealing with it. Your child has great resiliency and strength.

It is also important to acknowledge that, after experiencing or witnessing DV, children may become upset with and act out towards the non-offending parent. Women often report feeling pressure to go back to their abusers or to reunite the child with the abusive parent when faced with these behaviors. Children may say hurtful things, blame, be angry at, ignore, rebel against, or distance themselves from the non-offending parent. It can be very difficult to deal with these things but keep in mind that these behaviors are a sign that the child sees you as a safe person that they can express their feelings to. Your child is likely experiencing many emotions and may not yet know what to make of it all or how to handle it. It isn't easy, but try to stick it out and encourage the child to talk about how they are feeling. It will get better!

By reading this packet you are taking steps to help the child in your life process and heal from the trauma they may have experienced. While supporting your child remember that it is important that you have a support system in place to help you as well!



Effects of Domestic Violence on Children

Symptoms Children May Experience from Witnessing Violence

- Sleep difficulties: Frequent waking, nightmares, fear of falling asleep
- Somatic complaints: Headaches, stomach aches, aches/pains with no clear medical cause
- Increased aggressive behavior, angry outbursts
- Increased activity level
- Hypervigilance: Worries, fears, overreaction to loud noises or sudden movements
- Regression: Loss of skills learned at an earlier age, "babyish" behavior
- Withdrawal: Loss of interest in friends, school, or other activities the child used to enjoy
- Numbing: Showing no feelings at all, not bothered by anything
- Increased separation anxiety: Refuses to go to school, very upset when left with babysitter or child care provider
- Distractibility: Has trouble concentrating at school or home
- Changes in play: Repeatedly acts out or recreates violent events in play, less able to play spontaneously and creatively

Effects of Witnessing Violence on Children

- Most children who witness domestic violence have some symptoms associated with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Witnessing violence affects children's ability to learn. They may have difficulty concentrating in school. They may be easily distracted.
- Witnessing violence affects children's behavior, sometimes making it difficult to establish good peer relationships.
- Children who witness violence may be more aggressive and fight more often.
- Growing up with violence affects a child's basic drive to explore the world. Children may be less likely to be curious and try new things.
- Children growing up with violence are at greater risk to become violent themselves although most do not.
- Children exposed to high levels of domestic violence are a risk for adjustment problems in young adulthood.

EFFECTS OF VIOLENCE ON CHILDREN

Every child has different coping mechanisms and will react differently to violence. The following is a list of commonly identified feelings and behaviors of children in a shelter for battered women.

FEELING

BEHAVIOR

FEAR:

- | | |
|--|--|
| *of violence | *withdrawal or exaggerated attention getting |
| *of father (sometimes all men) | *negative reactions to men |
| *of abandonment | *separation anxiety |
| *of night-time (when violence occurred) | *bed-time fears |
| *trauma of upheaval and loss of familiar | *school phobia |

ANGER:

- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| *at father (or other men) | *acting out |
| *at mother (for not being able to stop violence) | *aggression, swearing |
| *at self (for not being able to protect mom) | *age-inappropriate temper tantrums |

GUILT:

- | | |
|---|--|
| *child is egocentric so feels responsible | *self-fulfilling prophecy; the belief "I'm bad" leads to acting out, leads to punishment, reinforces belief. |
| *for having negative feelings about one or both parents | *loss of motivation in school |
| for being "disloyal to family and friends | |

CONFUSION:

- | | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| *conflict over feelings toward parents | *ambivalent behavior: loving/angry |
| *unpredictable reactions from adults — child is unable to trust | *will test adults |
| *belief that relationships = violence | *confused belief system |

LEARNING DISABILITIES:

- | | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| *lack of emotional stability at home inhibits learning | *unable to concentrate in school |
| *fixation at developmental level at which trauma occurred | *sleepy (awake a lot at night) |
| | *regressive behavior |

SURVIVAL SKILLS

*** Many of these children have survived by adapting and developing the following skills:***

- *strong resilience
- *maturity
- *a well developed sense of responsibility
- bonds between siblings (creating a sense of safety and protection for each other that adults have not provided)
- *unusual sensitivity
- *rejection of the violent behavior

Children of Battered Women: Strengths and Resiliency

Strengths/ Resiliency Factors

Examples in Children Coping with Domestic Violence

Strategies for Reinforcing and Redirecting Strengths

Insight:

Ability to question the distorted images of the family.

Sensing "There's something wrong here." In adolescence, putting words to it, naming the problem.

Ask "How did you figure this out?" Validate their ability to name the problem/ listen to their gut feelings.

Relationships/social competency:

Connecting w/ others.
Empathy.
Caring.
Communication skills.

Actively seeks out people to connect with, including those outside family. Seeks out a counselor /other to talk to about the problem & feelings. Talks to peers about problem. Protects younger siblings, seeks to protect mom, concern for victim's or batterer's feelings (empathy).

Reinforce impulse to seek help. Practice communication skills. Validate/ redirect empathy - "It sounds like you really care about your mom. Let's try to think of a safer way to help her." "It's okay to love your Dad, but you and mom need to be safe."

Autonomy:

Independence.
Initiative.
Exploration.
Sense of who you are.
Ability to act independently.

Talent to distance oneself from family; finds a safe place away from the violence. Decides "It's okay to be different from the family" (defy family patterns & roles). Able to take risks within the family to make aspects of life controllable. Figures out when Dad might explode, then gets self & siblings out of it. Tries to intervene. Calls 911. Runs away.

"You were brave to protect your sisters." "You're good at figuring out when Dad might get mad." "Finding a safe place was important." "That was brave to try to protect your mom, but I'm worried you might get hurt, too. What's another way you could get help for mom?" "You really didn't want to be around the fighting anymore, but running away from home doesn't make you safe. What else can you do?"

Problem-solving:

Thinking abstractly.
Finding alternative solutions to problems.
Ability to plan.
Resourcefulness.

Developing multiple options for coping. Safety planning. Fantasy planning. Knowing how to make use of resources, ask for and get help. Calling 911. Talking to someone at school.

Teach safety planning. Allow children to explore options and make their own informed choices. With fantasy, validate the planning aspect. "It sounds like you put a lot of thought and planning into that idea."

Sense of Purpose/Hope:

Having goals.
Having a sense of his/her own future.

"I'm not gonna get married when I grow up." "I'm not gonna do that to my kids." "Do you think I'll be like that when I grow up?" "When I get bigger, I'll protect my mom."

Hear/ honor child's story without despair. Express your hope in their future. Validate their impulse to think about a future, even if the plans seem inappropriate.

Creativity & humor

Acting out/channeling the pain in play, drama, writing, etc. Fantasy.

Give children room for self-expression without censorship. Ask open-ended questions, provide avenues for creativity.

Resiliency: the ability to successfully engage in stress rather than avoiding it. Strength and the potential for resiliency are always there. Trauma comes in and out of children's lives and sometimes overshadows their strengths.



DOMESTIC ABUSE INTERVENTION PROJECT

202 East Superior Street
Duluth, Minnesota 55802
218-722-2781
www.duluth-model.org



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Tips for Talking to Children about Domestic Violence

What children need to hear

- **It's not your fault**
- It's not ok
- It must be scary for you
- I will listen to you
- I believe you
- You can tell me how you feel; it's important
- I'm sorry you had to see/hear it
- I will help you to stay safe
- There is nothing you could have done to prevent/change it
- It is not your job to try and stop it
- We can talk about what to do to keep yourself safe if it happens again

How to talk about the abusive partner

- Speak about them in a general way
- Try to avoid "name calling"
- Challenge the behavior, not the person – he/she made a bad choice(s)
- Your child may still love the abusive parent and may be confused by feeling this way. This could be hard for you too! But it will really help your child if she/he is able to express these feelings.

Ideas for helping children when they've witnessed domestic violence:

- Wait until they are ready to talk about it
- Listen to them without judging
- Help them identify their feelings
- Acknowledge and legitimize their thoughts and feelings about the violence
 - o "I understand why you would feel that way" instead of "you don't need to worry about that"
- Let them know that violence is not okay
 - o If it comes up, you can remind them that it is okay to be angry, but it is not ok to hurt people

- Acknowledge that it's hard/scary for them
- Accept that they may not be willing or able to talk about it right away
- Take them to counseling if they need it
- Share your own worries with another adult instead of the child
- Children often blame themselves for the abuse so it is very important to constantly remind the child that the violence is not their fault
- When talking to children, get down on their level by sitting or kneeling
- Keep it simple. Use short sentences and avoid elaborating. Try to answer only the question asked. Wait for the child to ask you for more information.
- Get support for yourself. Kids worry about you and you will be better able to support your child once you are getting the support that you need!

A Few Resources for Parents and Children

Parents:

- **Clackamas Women's Services:** emergency shelter, counseling, support groups, community education, community based case management, legal advocacy, *DHS advocates*, crisis line, all free. Information available in Spanish and Russian. www.cwsor.org crisis line: 503-654-2288
- **Clackamas County Behavioral Health:** 24-hour mental health crisis line. 503-655-8401
- **Portland Women's Crisis Line:** can provide service information, check shelter availability, help find counseling, and provide general domestic violence and sexual assault support. www.pwcl.org 503-235-5333
- **Volunteers of America Domestic Violence Intervention Program:** free and confidential advocacy and short-term case management 503-771-5503
- **Women's Counseling Center:** part of the Men's Resource Center. Offers counseling for domestic violence survivors, batterers, and families. 503-235-4050

Children/Youth:

- **The Oregon Youthline:** a free, confidential, 24 hour helpline specifically for teens 1-877-553-TEEN or www.oregonyouthline.com
- **Clackamas Women's Services Myspace:** our Myspace page designed just for teens. Has information about domestic and dating violence as well as links to other useful teen-related sites. www.myspace.com/cwsor
- **Sexual Minority Youth Resource Center (SMYRC):** Serves youth around issues of sexual orientation and gender identity. 503-872-9664 www.smyrc.org

Parents and Youth:

- **SafeNet for Women, Children, and Teens:** Nationwide service to coordinate domestic violence services and a 24-hour hotline. Provides Referrals to low-cost health and mental health services for youth. 1-800-789-9638
- **Victim Power:** provides anonymous communications with police for victims and witnesses of crime victimpower.org
- **211 Info:** Locate local emergency services 503-222-5555

- **El Programa Hispano/Un Nuevo Inicio Para Concluir el Abuso:** Domestic violence services and advocacy for Spanish-speaking people. Servicios de la violencia domestica para la gente que habla Español
- **Los Niños Cuenten:** un club de tejido para victimas de VD/AS (para mujeres) y clases para padres. 503-933-7840 o 503-974-9882
- **Programa de Mujeres:** Adult and children's Spanish-speaking domestic violence support groups. Grupos de apoyo de la violencia domestica para niños y mujeres 503-232-4448
- **Russian Oregon Social Services (ROSS):** Services for Russian women and families 503-777-3437
- **SAWERA:** Services for South Asian women and families. 503-778-7386

CLACKAMAS COUNTY COMMUNITY RESOURCES

BASIC AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

Clackamas County Community Behavioral Health (formerly Mental Health)..... (503) 655-8401
24-hour mental health crisis line

Clackamas County Social Services..... (503) 655-8640
TTY (503) 650-5646

Aging and Disability Services
Adult Care Home Licensing..... (503) 650-5615
Adult Protective Services
Report abuse and neglect of vulnerable adults
Community protective services..... (503) 650-5757
Facility complaint line..... (503) 650-5751
Disability Advocates Coalition... (503) 655-8215

Community Action Agency
Energy Assistance..... (503) 650-5640
Emergency Housing Info..... (503) 650-5750
Information & Referral..... (503) 655-8861
Lifespan Respite Care Info..... (503) 650-5724
Spanish Info & Referral..... (503) 655-8568
Volunteer Connection..... (503) 655-8640

Clackamas Women's Services..... (503) 654-2288
Crisis line, shelter and support services for domestic violence survivors

Community Service Centers
Emergency food, information and referral and other services for low-income residents
Clackamas Service Center..... (503) 771-7914
Estacada Family Resource Ctr. (503) 630-2888
Molalla Service Center..... (503) 829-5561
Sandy Community Action..... (503) 668-4746

Clackamas County Food Basket Program..... (503) 282-0555
Supplemental food program for low-income residents living in Clackamas County

Emergency Food Sites..... (503) 655-8861
Call for referral to a local food pantry

Gleaners of Clackamas County..... (503) 655-8740
Low-income food membership program

Oregon Partnership..... (503) 244-1312
24-hour Alcohol/Drug Helpline... 1-800-923-4357
Youth Line..... 1-877-553-TEEN
Spanish Line..... 1-877-515-7848

Salvation Army..... (503) 239-1266
Emergency food assistance

State of Oregon, Department of Human Services (Self Sufficiency)
Temporary Aid for Needy Families (TANF), Food Stamps, Medicaid, JOBS Program, OHIP
North Clackamas Self-Sufficiency Ctr..... (503) 731-3400
Oregon City Self-Sufficiency Ctr (971) 673-7300

State of Oregon, Department of Human Services (Child Welfare)
24-hour child abuse hotline..... (971) 673-7112

St. Vincent de Paul Social Services..... (503) 235-8431
Emergency services

Veterans' Services, Clackamas Co. (503) 650-5631
Benefit advocacy, information and referral

EDUCATION RESOURCES

Clackamas Community College..... (503) 657-6958

Clackamas Education Service District (ESD) Information..... (503) 675-4000
Early childhood programs including Early Intervention, Special Education, Head Start, Home Schooling and Migrant Services

Head Start..... (503) 675-4565
Preschool for children 3-4 years who are low-income and/or disabled

EMPLOYMENT & BUSINESS

Clackamas Community College..... (503) 657-6958
Career and Employer Resource Ctr..... ext. 2409

Community Solutions for Clackamas County (formerly ETBS)..... (503) 655-8840
Employment and training services, ages 14-seniors

State of Oregon Employment Department
Clackamas County One Stop..... (971) 673-6419
Employment/job placement..... (971) 673-6400
Unemployment claims..... (503) 451-2400

State of Oregon, Department of Human Services (Vocational Rehabilitation)..... (971) 673-6130
Vocational services for persons with disabilities

HOUSING RESOURCES

Clackamas County Community Development Division..... (503) 655-8591
Home rehabilitation loan programs

Clackamas County Housing Rights and Resources Program..... (503) 650-5750
Housing discrimination, landlord/tenant issues, emergency shelter and low-cost housing

Clackamas County Weatherization (503) 650-3338
Low-income weatherization assistance

Housing Authority of Clackamas County..... (503) 655-8267
Subsidized rental housing

HEALTH RESOURCES

Clackamas County Community Behavioral Health (formerly Mental Health)..... (503) 655-8401
24-hour crisis line and comprehensive mental health services to county residents

Clackamas County Community Health/ Public Health
Family planning, primary care, prenatal, immunization, AIDS information, WIC, well child, nutritional services, and dental services
Molalla Health Center..... (503) 723-2944
Oregon City Health Center..... (503) 655-8471
Oregon City WIC Program..... (503) 655-8476
Sandy Health Center..... (503) 722-6660
Dental Clinic..... (503) 655-8569

Healthy Start..... (503) 650-5684
Spanish line..... (503) 546-6533
Free support services to families with, or who are expecting, their first baby

Oregon Health Plan, Family Health Insurance Assistance Program, Children's Health Insurance Program..... (503) 655-8336

Oregon SafeNet..... 1-800-723-3638
Free health and dental information and referrals

Prescription Drug Helpline..... (503) 655-8269
Research availability of free or low cost prescription drugs for those with no coverage. Assist Medicare recipients with drug plan choices

YOUTH PROGRAMS

Boys and Girls Aid Society of Oregon
Portland Office..... (503) 222-9661
Juvenile justice diversion, runaways, maternity/post-birth and adoption services

Big Brother Big Sister Program..... (503) 742-2043
Youth mentoring services ages 6-16

Clackamas County Youth Gang Task Force..... (503) 656-4264
Intervention strategies and outreach services

Springwater Transitional Living Programs..... (503) 496-1160
Transitional housing, case management and support services for displaced youth ages 16-21

Camp Fire USA, Mt. Hood Council
New Parent Program..... (503) 656-2530 ext. 36

Clackamas Education Service District (ESD)
Child Care Resource and Referral..... (503) 675-4100
Information and support to families, child care providers, employers and the community

State of Oregon, Department of Human Services Child Welfare (Services to Children & Families)..... (503) 657-2112
Adoption, foster care, parent support, child abuse and neglect investigations

Young Parent Opportunity Program (YPOP)
Clackamas Community College..... (503) 657-6958 ext. 2592
Educational and support services for pregnant and parenting teens ages 15-21

YOUR COMMUNITY

Clackamas County Dispute Resolution Center..... (503) 655-8850
Community mediation and conflict resolution

Clackamas County Libraries..... (503) 650-3112

Clackamas County Social Services
Volunteer Connection..... (503) 655-8640
Volunteer opportunities throughout the county

State of Oregon, Department of Human Services
Volunteer Office..... (503) 657-2123 ext. 251
Recruit and place volunteers with agencies

Metro Recycling..... (503) 234-3000
Recycling & waste information and referral

Clackamas County Waste Reduction and Recycling Program..... (503) 557-6363
Recycling & waste information and referral

SENIOR AND DISABLED PROGRAMS

Clackamas County Community Behavioral Health/Developmental Disabilities Program..... (503) 655-8401
24 hr. crisis, case management, specialized counseling and support services

Clackamas County Social Services..... (503) 655-8640
Aging and Disability Services
TTY (503) 650-5646
Adult Care Home Licensing..... (503) 650-5615
Adult Protective Services..... (503) 655-8640
Disability Advocates Coalition... (503) 655-8215
Screening and Intake..... (503) 650-5633

Community Action Agency
Energy Assistance..... (503) 650-5640
Information and Referral..... (503) 655-8861
Lifespan Respite Care Info..... (503) 650-5724
Volunteer Connection..... (503) 655-8640

Senior Centers / Meal Sites
Services may include home-delivered and congregate meals, outreach, recreation, transportation, and adult day respite
Canby Adult Center..... (503) 266-2970
Estacada Community Center..... (503) 630-7454
Gladstone Senior Center..... (503) 655-7701
Hoodland Senior Center..... (503) 622-3331
Lake Oswego Adult Community Center..... (503) 635-3758
Milwaukie Center..... (503) 653-8100
Molalla Adult Community Ctr..... (503) 829-4214
Pioneer Community Center..... (503) 657-8287
Sandy Center..... (503) 668-5569
West Linn Adult Community Ctr. (503) 557-4704
Wilsonville Center..... (503) 682-3727

Senior Citizens Council..... (503) 657-1366
Guardianship/Conservatorship, In-Home Care, Health Equipment Loan Program, Gatekeeper Referral and CarrierLink

Social Security/Medicare Info..... 1-800-772-1213

LIFT..... (503) 802-8000
Special-needs public transportation for persons who are elderly/disabled

Transportation Reaching People... (503) 655-8208
Volunteer transportation for elderly and disabled, wheelchair accessible vans.

LEGAL SERVICES

Clackamas County Courts..... (503) 655-8447
Traffic/Accounting..... (503) 655-8453

Clackamas County District Attorney
Victims' Assistance Division..... (503) 655-8616
24-hour assistance for crime victims, domestic violence and victim restraining orders

Clackamas County Sheriff's Department..... (503) 655-8218
Law enforcement, crime prevention and public education

Family Court Service..... (503) 655-8415
Counseling, divorce, youth and family mediation, parenting education for divorcing couples

Legal Aid Services of Oregon..... (503) 655-2518
Low-income/civil cases
Child Support Helpline..... 1-800-383-1222

Oregon State Bar Association..... (503) 684-3763
Lawyer Referral Service; Modest Means Program



DIAL 211 OR CALL INFORMATION & REFERRAL (503) 655-8861

CHECK OUT OUR ONLINE DIRECTORY
"THE COMMUNITY RESOURCES GUIDE"
www.clackamas.us/socialservices/rguide