

What is Domestic Abuse?

Domestic abuse is when one person repeatedly uses coercive behaviors to gain control over another person.

It can include any one or combination of:

***Verbal abuse:**

(Name calling, yelling, threatening)

***Emotional abuse:**

(Ignoring, belittling, isolating)

***Financial abuse:**

(Controls money, interferes with employment)

***Stalking:**

(Calls repeatedly, monitors or follows you)

***Physical abuse:**

(Pushes, grabs, kicks, shows weapons)

***Sexual abuse:**

(Unwanted sexual contact, pressure/ guilt for sex)



Some children show the stress of witnessing abuse through:

- ◆ Aggressive behaviors
- ◆ Reduced social skills
- ◆ Withdrawal
- ◆ Fears / Anxiety
- ◆ Sleep disturbances
- ◆ Depression
- ◆ Complaints of stomach aches
- ◆ Changes in school performance

Children who have witnessed domestic abuse often need reassurance that the abuse is not their fault. They also need to hear that they are special, and that they can make choices to stay safe.

Why do kids who have witnessed abuse need support?

Many parents believe that closed doors can shield children from the effects of abusive behavior. However, children often describe accounts of the abuse in detail – events that their mother or father never realized they had witnessed. These children are more likely to experience emotional and behavioral difficulties.

You and your children's safety is the top priority. Once in a safe environment, the negative effects of witnessing domestic abuse *can* be successfully addressed.

Please know:

- Mothers can change the lives of their children for the better
- Single parents can be good parents
- Mothers can be role models for boys
- Working to get safe from violence is the best thing you could do for your children
- There are people to help if you need support

- Most psychological "problems" in children diminish once the violence stops
- Living with violence as a child is not a "life sentence" for a bad future
- Children are resilient and can thrive

- Not all children need professional treatment to overcome the effects of violence: there is a lot a mother can do to help her children.



How can I counter the effects of domestic abuse on children?

- **Get support to stay safe.**
- Talk about the abuse... Break the secret. Reassure children it is not their fault.
- Set clear and consistent limits. Let the child know your rules and limits.
- Build self-esteem. Let the child know that they are worthy of safety and security, not abuse.
- Praise good behavior.
- Teach self-control. When he/she is angry or frustrated, help the child stay in control by counting to 20, taking time out, or breathing slowly.
- Make time to play or talk.
- Help create a calm, safe environment (soft music, "quiet times" etc.).
- Help the children identify their emotions. Validate feelings; they have a right to be angry, scared, confused... encourage them to express these feelings.
- Begin individual or group therapy.
- Participate in community offerings, such as positive youth activities and mentoring programs (Big Brother/ Big Sisters Program, 4H, faith groups, etc).



SAFETY PLAN FOR KIDS 6-12

IF YOU DO NOT FEEL SAFE

- ◆ Stay out of the way. It is O.K. to get yourself safe.
- ◆ Call 9-1-1. Stay on the phone until the operator tells you to hang up.
- ◆ Call an adult neighbor, friend, or family member.
- ◆ Make a code word or signal you can use with your neighbor when you need help.
- ◆ Know all the routes you can use to get out of the house.
- ◆ Go to a safe neighbor's home.
- ◆ If other kids are fighting, it is alright for you to find an adult and get help.

QUESTIONS FOR ME TO ANSWER TO HELP KEEP MYSELF SAFE

- ◆ Who is a neighbor I can trust? _____
- ◆ Can I call them if I need help?
- ◆ Is there an adult friend I can call for help?

- ◆ What is the emergency phone number for my town? _____
- ◆ Who can I talk to about my scared feelings? _____
- ◆ Is there an adult at school I can trust?
Who? _____

Is your relationship safe and healthy?

If something about your relationship scares you and you need to talk, call anytime.

**National Domestic Violence Hotline:
1-800-854-3552**

Resources for Kids & Families:

- ✓ **Free & Confidential Local Advocate**
ccadv.org
Click: Getting Help/ Crisis Numbers
- ✓ **Group or Individual Counseling**
- ✓ **Community Resources**
Receive community information by dialing the three-digit number 2-1-1, or go to 211colorado.org
- ✓ **CO Family Support Line:**
877-695-7996
866-527-3264 - Español
- ✓ **Ask A Nurse**
303-777-6877 (Metro Denver)
800-327-6877 (outside Metro area)
- ✓ **Helping Children Thrive:
Supporting Woman Abuse
Survivors as Mothers:**
www.lfcc.on.ca/mothers.html

Once you are safe:

Considering Effects on Children Who Witness Domestic Abuse



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