

Children Who Witness Domestic Violence

Each year, an estimated 3.3 million children are exposed to incidents of domestic violence.¹ These children are at greater risk for emotional, behavioral, social and psychological problems. Domestic violence creates a home environment where children do not feel safe and may live in constant fear.

The Facts

- 80-90% of children living in homes where there is domestic violence are aware of the violence.²
- Recent exposure to violence in the home has been found to be a significant factor in predicting violent behavior of children and teenagers.³

What Do I Need to Know?

Domestic and dating violence doesn't just hurt you; it also hurts your children, no matter what their age. Infants exposed to family violence are more likely to have frequent illness, experience eating and sleeping problems, and show irritability, such as excessive crying. Preschool age children often complain of body aches, such as head and belly pain, have increased anxiety around strangers, and experience signs of terror, such as stuttering, hiding, yelling and nightmares. School-aged children who see domestic and dating violence in the home often show a loss of interest in social activities, low self-esteem and confidence, poor school performance, and post traumatic stress disorder. Adolescents are more likely to increase risk taking and antisocial behavior, such as dropping out of school and substance abuse. When children who witness family violence grow up into adults, they may commit crimes, violence, and partner abuse, be depressed, have substance abuse problems, and have low self-esteem.

Children deserve a healthy living environment and so do you.

What Can I Do?

If you are involved in an abusive relationship, it's important to get help, for you and your children. If you are a victim, talk to someone you trust and consider getting help to end your relationship safely. If you are abusing your partner, take responsibility for ending the abuse by getting help for yourself. Violence by one parent against the other is never okay and it is not only damaging to the adults; it is damaging to children as well.

Break the Cycle can help. We can help you learn about your options and connect you with the right resources in your community.

¹ American Psychological Association, Violence and the Family: Report of the APA Presidential Task Force on Violence and the Family, 1996.

² Pagelow, M.D. "Effects of domestic violence on children and their consequences for custody visitation agreements." *Meditation Quarterly*. 1990.

³ Mark I. Singer, et al., Cuyahoga County Cmty. Health Research Institute. "The Mental Health Consequences of Children's Exposure to Violence." 1998.

You have the right to a safe and healthy relationship..
free from violence and free from fear.