

# Effects of domestic violence on children

The effects of domestic and family violence are experienced by all family members.

Children who witness violence experience the same fear, intimidation and threat to their safety that you experience.

Children can be witnesses to violence, experience the violence and may be co-opted into perpetrating violence.

Studies show that children who witness domestic violence are more likely to:

- Display aggressive and/or socially inappropriate behaviours
- Have diminished self-esteem and self-worth
- Have poor academic performance, problem solving skills and concentration
- Show emotional distress, phobias, anxiety or depression
- Have physical illness or concerns

As a consequence of the violence they may:

- Avoid having friends over in case violence occurs
- Be distrusting of adults
- Feel guilt, shame and feel responsible for the violence and for stopping it
- Learn inappropriate behaviours
- Copy the aggressive behaviour of the perpetrator
- Learn to comply, keep quiet and not express feelings
- Learn to keep secrets and 'keep up appearances'.

# Children's domestic abuse wheel

## Abuse and children

### Isolation

- Inability to develop social skills
- Feeling alone and different
- Can't have friends over because of the need to hide violence
- Keeping harmful "secrets"
- Not trusting of adults

### Emotional abuse

- Doubting reality
- Fear of doing wrong
- Inconsistent limits and expectations by caregiver
- Fear of expressing feelings
- Inability to learn at school
- Low self-esteem.

### Physical and mental effects

- Children may feel guilt & shame, think it's their fault
- May regress to early stages of development
- Demanding & withdrawn
- Crave/hed
- Cranky, crabby kids

### Intimidation

- Putting children in fear by: using looks, loud actions, loud gestures, loud voice, smashing things, destroying property
- Fear of physical safety.

### Sexual abuse

- Shame about body
- Feeling threatened & fearful of their sexuality
- Learning inappropriate sexual talk behaviour
- Children having access to pornography magazines and movies

### Sexual stereotyping

- Copy abuser's dominant and abusive behavior
- Copying victimised passive and submissive behavior
- Unable to express feelings or who they are.

### Using children

- Being put in the middle of fights
- Children may take on roles, responsibilities of parents and give up being children
- Children seen and not heard
- Children being used to solve conflicts, asking them to take sides.

### Threats

- Learn to manipulate because of their own safety issues due to effects of violence in family
- Expressing anger in a way that is violent, abusive, or not expressing anger at all because of their own fear.

# Children's domestic abuse wheel

## Impact of domestic violence on parenting

When domestic violence occurs in a family there is an impact on the mother and child relationship. As a mother your confidence in your parenting abilities and your connection with your children may have been negatively affected.

The way that you mother and nurture your children may have had to change in order to keep your children and yourself safe.

In order to rebuild your relationship with your children you can:

- Work at keeping the channels of communication open by being present and listening to their concerns
- Let your children know that you love them
- Take time to do fun things as a family
- Model non-violent problem solving techniques
- Reinforce positive behaviours
- Encourage and support your children if they want to get counselling
- Design a safety plan with your children.