Domestic Violence and Its Effects on Children
Objective

Increase knowledge and understanding of the effects of domestic violence on children
Me when violence was happening

Me when the violence had stopped

The Harm is REAL
What About Us? Perspectives of the Children of Domestic Violence

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eWK_xebLgbk
Effects of Domestic Violence

• Abusive partners foster disrespect of the caretaker and their parenting authority.
• The effects of physical violence, verbal abuse, and victim blaming by the batterer may lead children to see their caretaker as helpless and unworthy of respect.
• Children may begin to think their caretaker deserves abuse.
Variety of Deliberate Tactics

- Undermining mother/caretaker’s authority
- Controlling the environment
- Instilling fear
- Negatively influencing the parent-child relationship
- Using children as weapons
- Tactics in custody disputes
- Hard to tell what is wrong
  - lack of clear physical signs
  - often have emotional and psychological wounds
- Signs of exposure are as varied as personalities
- Different reactions at different times
Emotional Reactions of Kids

- Feel responsible for the abuse
- Constant Anxiety
- Guilt for not intervening
- Ambivalence to family
- Fear of abandonment
- Need adult attention
- Fear of physical harm
- Worry about the future
Potential Effects

- Academic difficulties
- Overly aggressive behavior
- Mental health problems
- Isolated from other children
- Limited interaction outside of family
- Move frequently
- Nightmares/bedwetting/flashbacks
Impact of DV on Children

- Often believe violence is OK
- Boys are more likely to batter
- High risk of alcohol/drug abuse
- High risk of juvenile delinquency
- High risk of running away
• Nadine Burke Harris: How childhood trauma affects health across a lifetime
• https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=95ovIJ3dsNk
A child’s safety and well-being are dependent upon their caretaker’s safety.

A strong relationship of the child to their caretaker will help them survive witnessing domestic violence.
What do Children Need?

- Secure attachment to a non-violent parent, caregiver, or other significant adult
- Belief that they can succeed
- Social support
- Education
- Communication with others about what happened to them
- Safety
- Access to healthcare, safe housing, etc.
- Safety planning
Tell me. Maybe Iz help.
• Talk & act so they feel safe expressing themselves
• Acknowledge their right to their feelings
• Allow for privacy
• Be consistent
• Be clear about limits & expectations
• Listen and validate
HELPING CHILDREN FEEL SAFE & IN CONTROL

- Tell them what happened is not their fault
- Help them find a safe place to go when overwhelmed
- Make a plan for how to respond to triggers
- Don’t make promises you can’t keep
- Help them make a plan for what to do the next time violence happens
• Children should NEVER intervene
• Identify a safe, secure place to go
  ◦ During, after the violence
  ◦ Best way to get there
• Teach child to call 911 and not hang up
• Rehearse full name and address
• Rehearse scenarios and children’s responses
Healthy Communication

- Teaching children from violent homes about healthy communication is essential.
- Encourage to talk, write, or draw about their feelings.
- Validate that the violence did happen.
- Use “I” messages
- Planning, rehearsing
• Children carry the secret of domestic violence in their home.
• Children quickly learn:
  • Don’t talk about what happen
  • Don’t feel
  • Don’t ask questions
  • Don’t challenge the abuser
  • Don’t tell

Communicating with Children who have Witnessed DV
• Abuse hurts.
• Abuse is not ok.
• I have the right to feel safe.
• The abuse is not my fault.
• It is ok to talk about the abuse in my family.
- Child-proofing
- Images in the shelter
- Supporting routines (meal times, bedtimes, etc)
- Participation in events is voluntary

Make Shelter Child-Friendly
• Working with parents:
  ◦ Active learning
  ◦ Encouragement
  ◦ Repetition
  ◦ Respect the parent’s experience
• Antecedent
• Behavior
• Consequences
  ◦ Natural & Logical

• Behaviors that are reinforced will increase.
• Behaviors that are not reinforced will decrease and eventually disappear.
• **It is important to be consistent!!!**
Children who have been in homes with domestic violence have been traumatized!

Crying, wanting to be held, and seeking proximity are communications of need, not signs that the child is “spoiled.”

**Use of Praise, Rewards, & Attention**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Praise need to be...</th>
<th>Rewards need to be...</th>
<th>Attention needs to be...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>specific</td>
<td>immediate</td>
<td>Focused on positive behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>immediate</td>
<td>creative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>given without “butts”and other back-handed comments</td>
<td>small</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consistent- given every time the desired behavior is demonstrated by the child</td>
<td>motivating - refocus on positive behavior and praise what you want to see in the future</td>
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Children and DV

- Children who witness abuse are at risk of becoming a batterer or a victim. But--
- Domestic violence is a learned behavior; it can be unlearned.
Longitudinal studies reveal that 50 – 75% of children growing up in families where domestic violence is present demonstrate “resilience and triumph”.

...and that is EXACTLY how you should not do it!
“Violence is not inevitable, it is learned. And it can be unlearned.”

— Esta Soler, Founder & President, Futures Without Violence