



CHILDREN WHO ARE EXPOSED TO VIOLENCE IN THE HOME

Given the prevalence and severity of intimate partner violence (IPV) in households, the effects on children exposed to the violence are often overlooked. A non-offending parent may remain in an abusive relationship if leaving might result in homelessness or instability for the children. Many believe that children are shielded from knowledge of the actual violent acts; however, studies indicate that between 80 and 90 percent of these children are indeed aware of the abuse ⁽¹⁾.

DEFINITIONS

Children can be exposed to IPV including:

Witnessing IPV - directly seeing or hearing the abuse take place.

Being aware of the physical and emotional effects of the abuse experienced by a parent.

PREVALENCE

10-15 million children are exposed to violence in the home each year ⁽²⁾.

17.9% of children of all ages have been exposed to physical intimate partner violence in their lifetime ⁽³⁾.

40-60% of men who abuse women also abuse children ⁽⁴⁾.

EFFECTS

Children exposed to violence may exhibit the following (many of which are similar to the effects on the abused parent):

Physical – headaches, stomachaches, increased illnesses, accidental or purposeful injuries, sleep issues, nutrition/weight issues, weakened immune system, problems with brain development and functioning. Greater potential risk of poor future health outcomes.

Psychological – anxiety/fears, PTSD, depression, guilt, shame, confusion, anger, low self-esteem, loneliness.,

Behavioral – bedwetting, nightmares, crying, fighting/outbursts, aggression, destructive, lying, learning difficulties, concentration issues, not wanting to go home, not wanting to go to school, legal difficulties, substance abuse, poor academic performance ⁽⁵⁾. Increased risk of future victimization and perpetration, and decreased social and economic opportunities in life.

INTERVENTIONS

Provide therapy (talk, play and art) to address trauma experiences and foster healing.

Provide knowledge and support in the following areas: safety planning, coping skills, conflict resolutions skills, positive communication and behaviors.

Support/stabilize the family to reduce suffering and trauma and to increase safety and empowerment.



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RESOURCES

Video: Resiliency in Children. Ann Masten: Inside Resilient Children. www.youtube.com/watch?v=GBMet8oIvXQ

Webinar: National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma and Mental Health, "Helping Children and Teens Cope with the Effects of Domestic Violence: Fostering Healing and Resilience":https://bwjp.ilinc.com/per/ilinc/lms/vc_laung.pl?activity_id=zwttxrx&user_id=

Website: Futures Without Violence: Children, Youth and Teens: <https://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/children-youth-teens/>

Also see the Professional Guidance Sheet on IPV and Pregnancy.

REFERENCES

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