

Effects of Domestic Violence on Children

The Child as a Target

- As violence against women becomes more severe and more frequent in the home, children experience a 300% increase in physical violence by the batterer.
- More women in abusive relationships resort to physical violence to discipline their children.

The Child as a Referee

- Children can become injured in their attempts to protect their parent from attacks by abusive partners or in their attempts to prevent their parent from attacking their partners.

The Child as a Witness

- Despite the parent's blame, minimization or denial of the presence of children during violent incidents, children see, hear and can often describe detailed accounts of violent behavior.
- Children witness violent incidents in many ways:
 - What they hear. The screams and cries; the yelling and threats; the slap or punch; objects breaking; the sudden silence.
 - What they see. The bruises and torn clothes; the holes in the wall; the broken furniture; their mother's tears.
 - What they feel. Children will be able to sense the stress and tension within the home and may often have similar reactions as that of the primary victim of the assault.

The Risks to Children

- **Physical Injury:** Intended, Unintended, While Intervening
- **Neglect:** Physical and/or Emotional
- **Death:** Homicide, Suicide, Unintended, While Intervening

The Toll

- Children who witness domestic violence are likely to suffer from low self-esteem, *poor impulse control*, sleeping difficulties, and feelings of powerlessness. Many suffer from anxiety and depression, and are at a higher risk for alcohol/drug abuse, "*acting out*", running away from home, isolation, etc.
- Children from violent homes are at risk for a variety of serious problems and the intergenerational transmission of abusive behavior.
- Children from violent homes may compensate for parental behaviors by assuming responsibility, being compliant, and/or being invisible (quiet).

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The Emotional Injury

- Psychological Trauma/Scars
- *Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder*
- Low Self-esteem/Self-depreciation
- *Mood Swings*
- *Anxiety*
- *Depression*
- *Anger*
- Confusion
- Instability
- Phobias
- Distrust of Adults
- *Self-Destructive/Maladaptive Survival Mechanisms*

Self-Destructive/Maladaptive Survival Mechanisms

- Behavioral Characteristics
 - Disruptive
 - Angry
 - Defensive
 - Hostile
 - Self-Destructive
 - Agitated
 - Regressive
 - Aggressive
 - Withdrawn
- Behavioral Exhibitions
 - Whining and Crying
 - Temper Tantrums
 - Poor Impulse Control
 - Acting-Out Behaviors
 - Distrust of Others
 - Perfectionism
 - Exaggerated Independence
 - Control Issues
 - Lack of Empathy
- Physical Ailments
 - Poor Health/Stress Related Illnesses: Headaches, Ulcers, Stomachaches, Hives, Rashes and other Skin Problems.
 - Developmental Delays
 - Learning and Language Problems
 - Stuttering

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The Internalized Use of Violence

- Learned Roles
- Communication-Related Problems
- Expected Violence in Relationships

School Problems

- Educational Neglect
- Poor Adjustment to School/Peers
- Problem with Peer Relations/Social Competence
- Low Achievement

Delinquency Problems

- Stealing
- Runaway Episodes
- Alcohol/Drugs
- Joining Gangs
- Dating Violence

Interpersonal Problems

- Manipulative
- Callous/Cruel
- Highly Critical of Others
- Uncooperative