

# Support Groups

## *Exploring Healing and Empowerment for Survivors of Domestic Violence*

- \* For women who are experiencing, or who have experienced, intimate partner violence.
- \* Must be 24 hours clean and sober.
- \* Groups are free.
- \* Therapeutic childcare available by reservation. Call the crisis/support line (a minimum of two hours before group) for reservations.
- \* Call the crisis/support line for more information, location, and childcare reservations, at **443-6042**.

***Breaking the cycle of domestic violence through services, education, and advocacy.***

H D V S



[www.hdvs.org](http://www.hdvs.org)

**Humboldt Domestic Violence Services**

PO Box 969 Eureka, CA 95502

Business Line: (707) 444-9255

**Crisis/Support Line: (707) 443-6042**

**Toll Free: 1-866-668-6543**

## Parent's Packet

### **Children of Domestic Violence**

*"It's not only children who grow.  
Parents do too..."*



*...As much as we watch to see what our children do with their lives, they are watching us to see what we do with ours. I can't tell my children to reach for the sun. All I can do is reach for it, myself."*

*~Joyce Maynard*

Updated June 2011

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### ***HDVS Services:***

- ◆ 24-hour Crisis and Support line
- ◆ Community Resources and Referrals
- ◆ Emergency Shelter, Food, Clothing, and Transportation
  - ◆ Support Groups for Women Survivors  
(therapeutic childcare offered with reservations)
  - ◆ Children's Services
- ◆ Restraining Order Assistance and Court Accompaniment

**For more information please call the crisis/support line at  
443-6042 or toll free at 1-866-668-6543**

## **Safety During an Explosive Incident!**

- Always remember to call 911.
- If an argument seems unavoidable, try to have it in a room or area that has an exit...**NOT** in the bathroom, kitchen, or anywhere near weapons.
- Practice how to get out of your home safely. Which doors, windows, elevators or stairs would be best?
- Have a packed bag ready in case you need to leave quickly. Keep it in a secret but accessible place. Perhaps even at a friends house that you trust.
- Identify a neighbor you can tell about the violence. Ask them to call the police if they hear disturbances coming from your home.
- Devise a code word to use with your children, family, friends, and neighbors when you need the police.
- Decide and plan for where you will go if you have to leave home **(even if you don't think you will need to)**.
- If the situation is very dangerous, use your own instincts and judgment to keep you and your children safe. Call the police as soon as it is safe to do so.

**You have the right not to be abused in your relationship! Either, physically, emotionally, mentally or sexually!**

### **A checklist of things you'll need if you decide to go:**

- |                            |                          |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| — Identification           | — Money                  |
| — Birth Certificates       | — All Medical Info       |
| — Social Security Cards    | — Pets (if you can)      |
| — Keys: House & Car        | — Pictures               |
| — Medications              | — Restraining Order      |
| — Bank Books               | — School Records         |
| — Checkbooks               | — Welfare Identification |
| — Divorce Papers           | — Work Permits           |
| — Car Title & Registration | — Marriage Certificates  |
| — Immigration Papers       | — Address Book           |
| — Insurance Papers         | — Phone Charger          |
| — Lease, House Deed        | — Jewelry                |
| — Passports                |                          |

# Commitment to Myself

♥ I will **give myself space to grow, to dream, to succeed, and even fail** ♥ I will **create a loving home environment** ♥ I will **take time for myself** and cherish my private, personal moments ♥ I will **remain open** to the world and it's many opportunities ♥ I will **take care of myself** physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually ♥ **I will be gentle, kind, and patient** with myself and others ♥ **I will praise myself and remember my strengths** ♥ I will **be resilient** ♥ I will **strive to be even greater than I already am** ♥ I will **value and respect my body and feelings**, and surround myself with people who also do ♥ I will be **kind with my mind** ♥ I will **seek out friends that accept me for me** ♥ *I will accept me for me* ♥

I will always love and respect myself

for who I am!!

Dear Parent,

You deserve love, respect, support, and to be cared for...and your children do too. The information on the following pages is designed to help you understand the effects domestic violence may have on your children, and to help you support them as they deal with, and heal from, the violence. We have other resources also available to help with this. In particular, our "Guide to Non-Violent Parenting," and our packet titled "What is Intimate Partner Violence?". Ask for these if you are interested in additional information.

As the parent, you are the most important person in the equation...if you are not healthy and cared for, it will be difficult to care for your children. We can help you in many ways. Services we offer are emergency shelter; support groups (for children too); emergency food, clothing, and transportation; a 24-hr. crisis and support hotline; restraining order assistance; court accompaniment; community resources and referrals; as well as ears and hearts listening with compassion. We understand the cycles and circles, and ups and downs, of intimate partner violence, and can help you to understand it also. You have many strengths that have carried you and your children this far. We know you have been through a challenging time and we are here to support you in moving forward, in whatever way that means for you.

Respectfully,

The Staff at HDVS

HDVS



## Through the Eyes of a Child

Did I do something wrong to make you  
lose control?

Anger so strong or do you even know?

That when you come home

I want to run and hide

The pain is so deep

that I keep it inside

I'm not the same because of you

Always afraid of what you'll do

If only you could see yourself through  
my eyes

You'd know why (I'm dying inside)

Sometimes I need a firm but gentle hand

Someone who cares and understands...

that I am still learning

But I just can't take this abuse from you

There is no excuse

I'm not the same because of you

Always afraid of what you'll do

If only you could see yourself through my eyes

You'd know why (I'm dying inside)

This is no way to live

If you try to change I'll try to forgive.

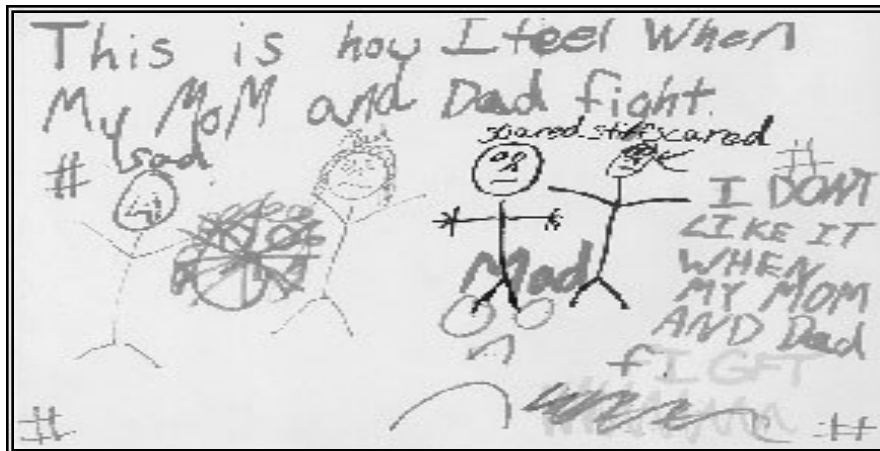
Poem from CHANCE:

Changing How Adults Nurture Children's Egos

[www.chanceinc.org](http://www.chanceinc.org)



\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\* Drawings by \*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\* anonymous chil- \*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\* dren, provided \*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\* by Domestic \*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\* Abuse Program \*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*



## Commitment to My Children

- ♦ **I will** always **love and respect my children** for who they are - not for who I *want* them to be.
- ♦ **I will** give my children space to **grow, dream, succeed**, and **even sometimes to fail**.
- ♦ **I will** create a loving home environment and show my children they are loved - whenever and however I can.
- ♦ **I will**, when discipline is necessary, let my children know I disapprove of what they are doing, **but not** who they are.
- ♦ **I will** set limits for my children and explain clearly what is expected of them.
- ♦ **I will** make time for my children, **cherish our moments together**, and remember how important the moments are.
- ♦ **I will not** burden my children with my personal emotions and problems. *I will remember that I am the parent and they are the children.*
- ♦ **I will encourage my children** to experience the world and its opportunities, guiding them in its ways. I will teach them to *be careful – but not fearful*.
- ♦ **I will** take care of myself physically and emotionally, so I can be there for my children when they need me.
- ♦ **I will** do my best to be the kind of person I want my

# 10 Approaches NOT to use!

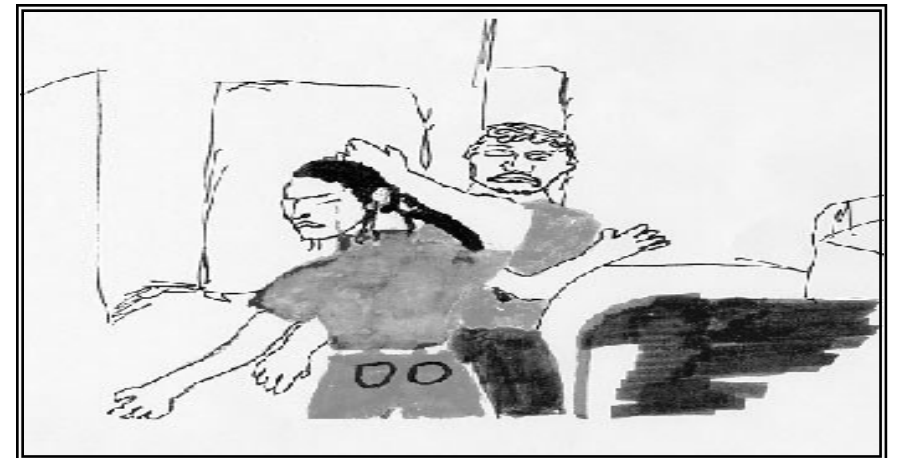
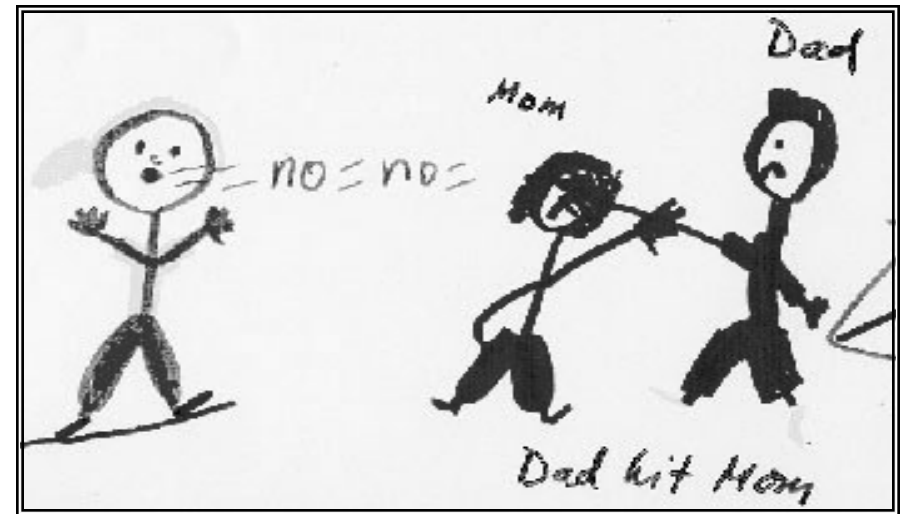
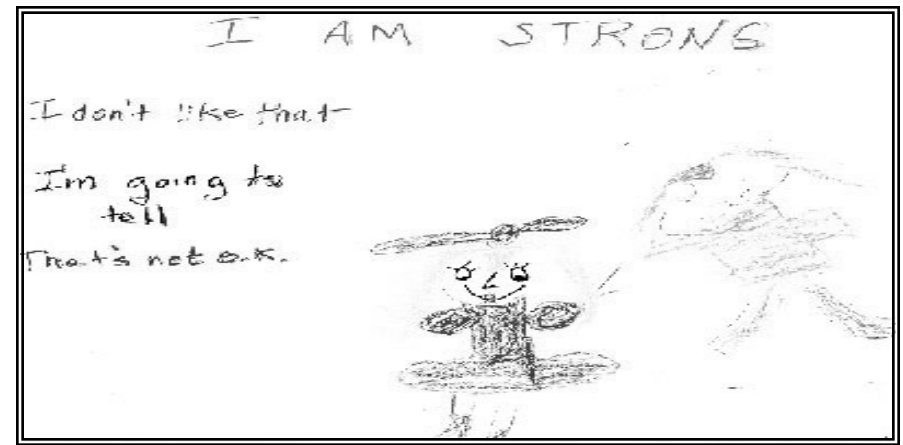
These approaches are least likely to be successful, and may even create undesirable behavior. Do your best to avoid them.

1. **Physically Expressing Anger.** The child will learn to use physical violence to express anger instead of words.
2. **Shouting.** Show them instead how to use words appropriately.
3. **Lecturing.** Children have short attention spans, lecturing is ineffective.
4. **Demanding Explanations of Inappropriate Behavior.**  
The child will react rather than reason to avoid getting into trouble.
5. **Expecting Behavior Beyond the Child's Age Level.**  
Most two-yr-olds can't sit still for a long time, don't ask them to.
6. **Labeling Behavior.** "That's not nice, you're a bad girl."
7. **Threatening.** "If you....then I'm going to...."
8. **Talking Down to Your Child.** "You don't know anything."
9. **Giving Choices When There is No Choice.** For example, *asking* a child if they want to wash their hands when *expecting* them to do so.

10. **Pulling Rank.** "Do it because I said so."

\*See the Guide to Non-Violent Parenting for alternatives of what *to* use.

**Everything you do is a model for  
your child's behavior!**



## ***Effects of Domestic Violence on Children:***

Children are effected by the violence in their homes. Regardless of whether or not your children have been physically abused, watching their parent being abused is a frightening experience. Children from violent homes can exhibit a variety of behaviors. Some may "act out" and may be viewed as delinquent. Others work very hard to excel at every endeavor in attempt to keep the family peace. Living with violence creates intense stress for a child. Below is a list of behaviors frequently associated with children from violent homes, followed by several pages of more effects and their explanations.

### ◆ **Depression**

### ◆ **Withdrawal** - isolation, loneliness.

- ◆ **Physical Complaints** - headaches, stomach aches, bed wetting, ulcers.
- ◆ **Poor Self Image**
- ◆ **Eating Problems** - increased or decreased appetite.
- ◆ **Trouble Sleeping** - which makes them overly tired during waking hours.
- ◆ **Hair Pulling/Nail Biting**
- ◆ **Physical Injuries**
- ◆ **School Phobias and Impaired Concentration**
- ◆ **Temper Tantrums**
- ◆ **Nightmares**
- ◆ **Fear of Men-** and/or their voices.
- ◆ **Fear of Being Touched** - flinching when someone reaches toward them.
- ◆ **Disruptive Behavior** - stealing, aggression.
- ◆ **Passivity** - clinging, anxiety.
- ◆ **Role Reversal-** child assumes parental roles, protector/caretaker.
- ◆ **Suicidal Ideation** - and/or suicide attempts.

Source:AWAIC: <http://www.awaic.org>

## **WAYS TO SOOTHE A CRYING BABY!**

- ⇒ Make sure baby's basic needs are met, (food, diapering, appropriate clothing, etc..).
- ⇒ Lower any surrounding noise and lights.
- ⇒ Hold baby to your chest and gently massage him/her.
- ⇒ Change the environment. Take baby into another room or outside.
- ⇒ Take baby for a ride in stroller or car (if you have one). If not, walk baby while holding him/her close to you.
  - ⇒ Rock, walk, or dance with baby.
- ⇒ Offer baby a noisy toy; shake or rattle it.
  - ⇒ Offer baby a pacifier.
  - ⇒ Sing or talk to baby in soothing tones.
- ⇒ Hold baby close...breathe slowly and calmly... she/he may feel your calmness and become quiet.
  - ⇒ Give baby a soothing bath.
  - ⇒ Read to baby.
- ⇒ Call a pediatrician or clinic if you think baby might be sick.
  - ⇒ Be patient; take a deep breathe and count to ten.



**If you are feeling overwhelmed...**see if someone can come help while you take a break. If not, put baby in a crib or safe place, close the door and take 5 minutes, play some of your favorite music, make a cup of coffee or tea, take a shower or read, you can even read to other children in a different room...shake a rug, scrub the floor, throw out the trash, clean a room or closet, do an art project, sit down and close your eyes and think of a pleasant space and time, write down the 10 best things about yourself, write down the 10 best things about your baby...



## ***An Example of Effective Language to Use When Your Child has Made a Poor Choice***

If you hear about or see your child making a poor choice, talk to them about it. Often children do not want to talk in the moment. If this is true with your child then wait until a little later to bring it up. The example below may be used as a guide...

**“I hear/see you might not have made the best choice today/yesterday. I saw that you didn’t actually complete your homework when you told me you did. My heart goes out to you right now (or, I feel for you right now, or I am sad for you). What led you to make this choice?”**

- Let your child respond. Listen and empathize with them and what they are saying. Listen to what is not being said as well.
- Then respond:

**“Do you see how your choice affected yourself/other people?”** Help figure this out if needed, but try to avoid giving them the answer. Then ask:

**“How do you feel about your choice?”** After your child explains their feelings, validate them:

**“I can certainly understand why you feel the way you do,” or “It makes sense why you would feel that way.”**

- Be sure to also validate their process and end on a positive note:

**“Well you might not have made the right choice in regards to \_\_\_\_\_, but I sure am proud of you for seeing the consequences and noticing your feelings around that. I bet next time you’ll make a better choice. Now keep that head up and let’s have a great day/night!”**

- If the situation is minor, use the above sketch, or something similar. However, if the child did something that could result in bodily harm, it’s okay to be a little firmer:

**“Please stay in the yard! Don’t go past the fence! I was scared for you! I was concerned about your safety...please keep yourself safe.”** Reason with your child about the unsafe consequences of their actions. Keep it brief and simple...don’t lecture. Simply explain what might happen if they run into the street.

## ***Further Effects...***

### **Imitation**

Children often imitate behaviors they witness. Generational transfer of violent behavior and emotional dependency on others is common, thus, children learn that violence is an acceptable behavior and an integral part of intimate relationships. Children may become abusive adults or accept domination and control as a normal part of intimate relations. Children raised in an abusive environment may be abused as adults.

### **Targets of Violence**

Children are often abused in order for the abuser to hurt, punish, or gain revenge upon his/her spouse. The abuser may feel "ganged up" on by family members who act or speak out against their violence. Or, the child gets caught in the crossfire and is unintentionally injured as a result of parental conflict. This is still considered child endangerment. The child is also abused by the victim as she/he releases stress on the child or attempts to keep the child "in line" so not to "irritate" the abuser.

### **Neglect**

A victim living under the stress of the abuser is seldom able to fully attend to the needs of the children. Infants may not become attached to their primary caretaker and lack trust; young children's growth may be stunted due to lack of stimulation; and may have sleeping and eating disorders. Infants and children who are neglected by their caregivers are prone to illness and have tremendous difficulty in areas of development and overall well being.

### **Emotional Disorders**

Low self-esteem and low confidence often result when children are unable to handle life situations. Phobias, depression, stress disorders, stuttering, insomnia, impaired concentration difficulty in school, psychosomatic illnesses, etc. are a result of the chaotic/abusive home environment and often go unattended because the parent is overwhelmed by their own need.

### **Self-blame**

Arguments about child rearing and/or a child's behavior often precipitate violent episodes between parents. The child may see him or herself as responsible for the violence and may compensate through suicidal thoughts, overly pleasing behavior or extreme acting out behavior. Children blame themselves for the violence in their home. They may be thinking, "it is all my fault and if I weren't here, none of this would be happening."

### **Low Self-esteem**

Children raised in violent home settings usually have poor definitions of self and values; inconsistent responses from the parents to the child's behavior can undermine a child's self-esteem even more. Psychological and emotional abuse also defeats self-esteem and fosters feelings of confusion, helplessness and powerlessness.

### **Compensation**

Children assume adult responsibilities that can endanger the child physically as well as delay the child's physical and emotional development. They may go from child to adult roles without passing through adolescent stages, for example, by caring for the victim and/or younger children or caring for themselves. Children raised in violent homes often care for younger siblings in the absence of primary caretakers, or take over the "adult roles" such as cooking meals or cleaning the house.

### **Runaways**

Children may run away to seek independence and freedom from violence, rage, and arguments at home. Children learn that running from their problems is an appropriate means of dealing with crisis instead of communicating with others to get problems solved.



- **Affirm your child's strengths.** Have them show you their interests, hobbies, and what they are good at. Give her/him opportunities to build new skills. Help them focus on a subject of their interest, then aid them in striving to become knowledgeable on that topic.
- **Spend one-on-one time with each of your children** – even if it is only a few minutes each day.
- **Seek out children with similar** interests as your child for playmates and coordinate play-dates at home, a park, the beach, etc.
- **Have visual displays of your child's success.** Acknowledge their progress and praise your child.
- **Sit with your children when they do their homework.** This shows them you are supportive and available.
- **Be encouraging and supportive of school functions and extracurricular activities.** Such activities provide opportunity for your child to experience being part of a community, rather than isolated.
- **Lead your children to empowerment in finding safety.** Show them how to call 911 and an abused children's hotline if they are hit, neglected, or threatened. Teach your children how to contact family members or close friends if they feel unsafe at home (for example, going to a neighbor or friend's house). This will give them the protective tools they need to combat terror, isolation, and feelings of helplessness.
- **Help your children learn how to solve problems.** Guide them in communicating and seeking alternatives when appropriate. Support their decisions. If they believe it is necessary to take a risk – support that. It is important they don't give up!

**National Child Abuse Hotline**

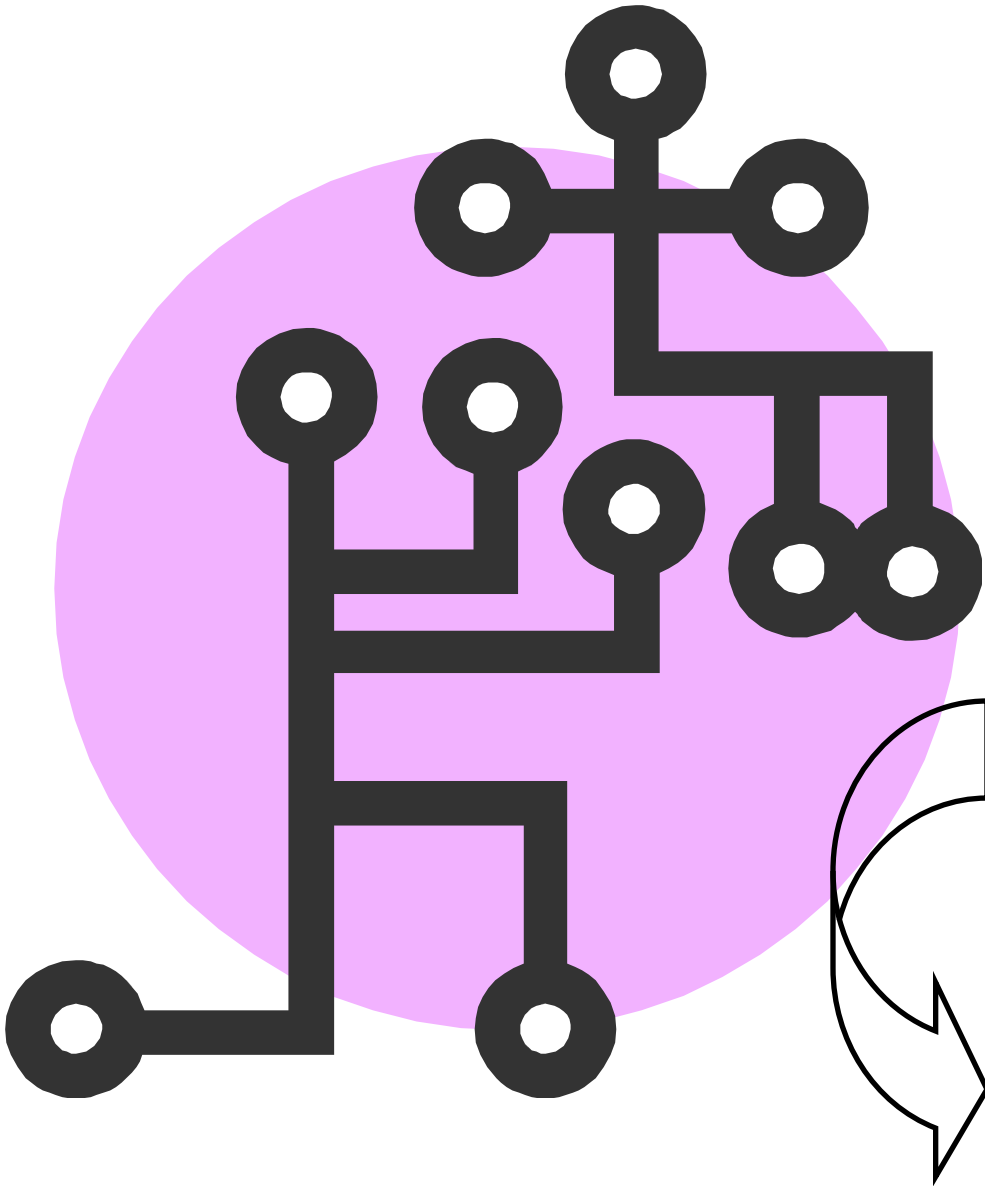
**1-800-422-4453**

**Available 24 hours a day**



## ***Rebuilding Your Child's Self Esteem...***

Self-esteem boosting is crucial for any child, and especially for children who have experienced violence at home and/or bullying. See the next page for simple ways to help your children feel good about themselves.



### **Mixed Feelings**

When a child lives in an abusive environment, feelings of guilt, fear, helplessness, bottled rage, and embarrassment usually result.

### **Fear of Abandonment**

During or after an attack, children are often sent to stay with friends, family, or neighbors. Siblings may be separated or authorities may intervene. Parents are fearful that Child Welfare Services may take their children into protective custody, or that the abusive spouse may kidnap the children to use as "leverage" or as "bargaining chips" against the other spouse. All of these situations can result in separation anxiety, and a fear of abandonment, for the children.

### **Poor School Performance**

Problems at home (specifically violence) may cause loss of attentiveness, lack of adequate rest, and poor nutritional habits in children. Low self-esteem and inability to complete assignments are roots of poor school performance. Children raised in homes where violence of any kind is a frequent occurrence often have tremendous difficulty academically. Some children may compensate for the violent environment by overachieving or by putting all of their concentration into one activity such as academics or sports.

### **Substance Abuse**

Children with inappropriate or inadequate coping mechanisms, along with low self-esteem, will often give in to peer pressure and become involved with drug and alcohol use. If you (the parent) cope with stress by smoking or using drugs/alcohol, your children may model after you and also cope with stress by smoking and using drugs and alcohol.

### **Suicide**

Children who experience violence in their homes may have thoughts of suicide as a means of "escaping." Self-mutilation and obsession with death are common responses.

Further effects of DV on children continued on next page...

### **Divided Loyalties**

Children often attempt to protect and defend all family members, and are often used by one or both parents against the other. Children feel a natural love for both parents, and are confused about why their parents are hurting. Feelings of shame and guilt result. Then, the children may isolate themselves from peers and other family members. Children experiencing these feelings are often locked into silence by the abuse, resulting in an inability to express these feelings.

### **Lack of Trust**

Children with parents in a chaotic relationship often experience emotional and physical neglect, but then an outpouring of affection as the abuser attempts to reconcile abusive behavior. Children don't know who, when, or how to trust when they experience such an erratic, unpredictable relationship with their parents.

### **Refereeing**

Children are in danger of being involved in the assault both emotionally and physically by attempting to mediate between parents. Additional emotional damage happens because the "referee" is expected to be impartial while the child may be experiencing divided loyalties. If a child assumes the role of "referee," she/he may withdraw from both parents.

**Children from violent homes are more vulnerable to being abused themselves.** A major study of more than 900 children at abused women's shelters found nearly 70% of the children were abused or neglected themselves. Nearly half had been physically or sexually abused, and 5% had been hospitalized due to abuse.

**Children from violent homes often find relationships difficult.** It is common for them to have difficulty trusting others, to display overly aggressive or passive behavior, to find problem solving difficult, poor anger management, and isolation from friends and relatives. A child from a violent home is more likely to become an abuser or a victim of abuse.

## *Love and Care*



imperative and can bring healing to their lives. It is important for a parent to reflect these essentials:

### **Share Time Together**

Participate in your children's lives, in their activities, school, sports, special events, celebrations, and friends. Include your children in your activities as well. Reveal who you are to your children. And never underestimate the power of reading together (see below).

### **Encourage and Support**

Be affirming. Encourage children to follow their interests. Let children disagree with you. Teach new skills. Guide them to try something new. Let them make mistakes. Recognize improvement.

### **Give Affection**

Express verbal and physical affection everyday. Be sure to be especially affectionate when your children are physically or emotionally hurt.

### **Care for Yourself**

Figure out a way to spend personal time with yourself. Can you wake up a little earlier? Go to bed a little later?...Take a bath while the children are sleeping, maintain friendships, accept love, write in a journal, ask for help when you need it...do your best to keep yourself healthy.

Reading to your children is a simple and special way to spend time together. It is not only relaxing, but also benefits your children in a myriad of ways, including:

- Academic excellence.
- Basic speech skills.
- Learning the basics of how to read a book.
- More logical thinking skills.
- Easing adjustment to new experiences.
- Enhanced concentration and discipline.
- Awareness that reading is fun.
- Better communication skills.
- Mastery of languages.
- ***A stronger relationship with you!***



# Giving Children

Nurturing children from abusive homes is  
In giving needed love and care to children, it

## Trust and Respect

Acknowledge children's right to have their own feelings, friends, activities and opinions. Promote age-appropriate independence, allow for privacy and respect their feelings for the other parent. Believe them and believe *in* them.

## Emotional Security

Talk and act so children feel safe and comfortable expressing themselves. Be gentle. Be dependable. Be consistent.

## Physical Security

Provide healthy food, safe shelter and appropriate clothing. Teach personal hygiene and nutrition. Monitor safety. Maintain a family routine.

## Discipline

Be consistent; ensure that rules are appropriate to age and development of the child. *Be clear* about limits and expectations. Use discipline to give instruction, not to punish. See the HDVS Guide to Non-Violent Parenting for more help with this.

**Support your children...  
Read with them!**



## Listening and Talking to Children about Family Violence

As painful as it may be, it is very important that parents talk with their children about violence in the family. If you don't talk about what is really going on, children may think you don't care about their feelings. Furthermore, if the truth is not disclosed, children will begin to distrust their own feelings and perceptions.

Children have many thoughts and feelings about the violence which need to be expressed. Life in a violent home is scary, confusing, and causes anxiety. Your child is likely wondering, "Are things okay, or aren't they?". They recognize that one minute it's peaceful in their home and the next they are "walking on eggshells."



**Your children need your presence  
more than your presents.**

-Jesse Jackson

### ***Help in Talking with Your Children About the Family Violence***

- It is extremely important to reassure your children that there is nothing they could have done to prevent the situation and they are not the cause of the abuse.
- Children who grow up in a violent home tend to feel guilty, even though they have done nothing wrong. **Convince them** the violence is not their fault—talk about it, even if they don't bring up the subject.
- Remember that children are strong, resilient, and have the ability to “bounce back.”
- Children are naturally self-centered, which may prove to be helpful by protecting them from their pain. Often their main concerns are: “How is this going to affect me? If daddy is no longer with us, who will buy our new car? Will we still be able to go to Disneyland?” Answer these questions with honesty, gentleness, empathy, and compassion.
- It is very important that you listen to your children when they are ready to talk. This will probably not happen right away, so be patient. At some point they will be ready, and when they are, validate their feelings by saying something like, “Yes, that happened...It is lousy...And remember I empathize with how you feel, what you are feeling is okay, normal, and understandable.”

**“Always kiss your children goodnight-  
even if they're already asleep.”**

### ***An Example of Effective Language to Use When Your Child is Experiencing a Problem***

If your child appears upset, offer a hand in helping them come up with a solution to how they might solve the problem. Remember to first and foremost validate their feelings. You can not fix the problem for them, but you *can help them find a solution*. If they do not want to talk, do not force them; things could end up worse off. Instead, simply let them know you are available to talk when they are ready. At bed time, if they still have not brought it up, it is okay to remind them... **“I just want to again let you know I am here to listen and help if you have a problem...and now would be a good time if you do.”** If they say no, that's okay, don't push...give them a hug or kiss and say good night. The more you make yourself available in this way in the future, the more they will begin to feel comfortable and eventually open up. On the other hand, if they are ready to talk now, below is a sketched out scenario of one possible way it could go:

- Child tells you their problem.
- You respond:

**“What a bummer! You must feel sad/hurt/angry/frustrated/confused/lonely. If I lost my homework at school and I didn't know what to do, I might feel the same way!”** (This is the validation of their feelings part.)

Then move into the solution: **“What might you do about this?”**

- If your child has an idea of what to do, great, support them in that. However if your child responds: “I don't know,” then you respond:

**“Do you want to hear about what some other kids might have done in a situation like yours?”** (Offer solutions) **“How do you think it would work if you tried one of those solutions? Do you have another idea?”**

- After responding to and validating your child's feelings about the problem, and after the plan for a solution has been made, you say:

**“I am confident you can solve this problem, let me know how it works out. If our plan doesn't work, no problem. We can come up with another idea...we'll figure it out together.”**