



How to Help a Child that has been Affected by Domestic Violence?

What is Domestic Violence?

Domestic violence is a pattern of emotional, verbal, physical, financial, and/or sexual abuse, including threats, intimidation, isolation, manipulation and/or coercion used by one person in a dating, family or household relationship to exert power and control over another person.



Children experience domestic violence in a variety of ways – usually as witnesses to abuse in their homes. They may hear one parent threaten, intimidate or demean the other parent verbally, or they may see one parent physically hurt the other parent.



The most important factor to helping children who experience domestic violence heal and recover is a strong relationship with a caring, nonviolent parent and other supportive adults.

What can you do to support children that have experienced Domestic Violence?

In addition to support from a non-abusive adult, there is always professional, free support available to all families that have experienced domestic violence through local domestic violence agencies.



How to support your child at home:

- Be calm, nurture and reassure your child that they are safe with you, and provide positive support to the child through active listening and positive praise.
- Set regular routines at home that make daily life more predictable.
- When your child is upset or acting out, connect with them first emotionally and then once they are calm, talk with them and help them tell a story of what happened and what was upsetting them.
- Offer safe and acceptable choices and options, and explain that it is your job to help keep them safe by setting expectations and making healthy decisions for your family.
- Provide options and opportunities for them to physically move their bodies and release negative energy in a positive way.
- If a child is playing violently or mimicking violent behaviors, talk with them about healthy and unhealthy behaviors, and be direct about addressing the domestic violence they have experienced.

What are the impacts of Domestic Violence on children?

- Increased fear
- Sleep problems
- Clinging behaviors
- Outbursts or tantrums
- Increased aggression/imitation of the abuse or violence during their play
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Brain Development: emotional and behavioral dysregulation, dissociation, sensory and/or cognitive issues



sarahsinn.org

collab4kids.org