



"Hands are for helping, Not hurting"



Effects of Domestic Violence on Children:

In homes where domestic violence occurs, children are at high risk of suffering physical abuse themselves. Regardless of whether children are physically abused, the emotional effects of witnessing domestic violence are very similar to the psychological trauma associated with being a victim of child abuse. Each year, an estimated minimum of 3.3 million children witness domestic violence.

1. Children in homes where domestic violence occurs are physically abused or seriously neglected at a rate 1500% higher than the national average in the general population.
2. Research results suggest that battering is the single most common factor among mothers of abused children.
3. A major study of more than 900 children at battered women's shelters found that nearly 70% of the children were themselves victims of physical abuse or neglect. Nearly half of the children had been physically or sexually abused. Five percent had been hospitalized due to the abuse. However, only 20% had been identified and served by Child Protective Services prior to coming to the shelter. The same study found that the male batterer most often abused the children, in about one-fourth of the cases both parents abused the children, and in a few instances only the mother.
4. Lenore Walker's 1984 study found that mothers were 8 times more likely to hurt their children when they were being battered than when they were safe from violence.
5. Although child abuse and neglect are strongly linked to domestic violence, child protection organizations have paid little attention to the concurrence of the two problems. For example, in 1984, only 15 states participating in the American Humane Association's National Study of Child Abuse and Neglect collected data on the mother's abuse. In 1985, this number dropped to 6 states collecting these data.
6. Children in homes where domestic violence occurs may "indirectly" receive injuries. They may be hurt when household items are thrown or weapons are used. Infants may be injured if being held by their mother when the batterer strikes out.
7. Older children may be hurt while trying to protect their mother.
8. Children from violent homes have higher risks of alcohol/drug abuse and juvenile delinquency
9. Approximately 90% of children are aware of the violence directed at their mother.
10. Children are present in 41-55% of homes where police intervene in domestic violence calls
11. Some of the emotional effects of domestic violence on children include:
 - Taking responsibility for the abuse;
 - Constant anxiety (that another beating will occur);
 - Guilt for not being able to stop the abuse or for loving the abuser;

- Fear of abandonment.

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1. Children in homes where domestic occurs may experience cognitive or language problems, developmental delay, stress-related physical ailments (such as headaches, ulcers, and rashes), and hearing and speech problems.
2. The majority of abused women who use shelter services bring their children. In one study, 72% of the women brought children to the shelter, 21% were accompanied by three or more children.
3. Boys who witness domestic violence are more likely to batter their female partners as adults than boys raised in nonviolent homes. There is no evidence, however, that girls who witness their mothers' abuse have a higher risk of being battered as adults.
4. Approximately 15 states have passed legislation recognizing that domestic violence should affect child custody decisions.

Information compiled from:

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