

# Children 4 - 12

## **PARENTS: WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW**

This fact sheet for parents is about the effects of domestic and family violence on young children. It gives you some ideas to protect your children from its effects. There are services who can help you and your children. If your partner is being violent to you, it can have serious effects on your children. Children learn by copying what they see around them. Children see and hear violence around them.

You and your children have a right to live safely.  
Violence is never your fault.  
Violence is an act that hurts you or your children.

It may be:

- physical: hurting your body
- emotional: hurting your feelings
- sexual: making you do sexual things you don't want to do
- mental: threatening you, putting you down, trying to control you or harming your mind
- financial: controlling your budget

If you are feeling unsafe, there are people who can help you and your children.

## **WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR YOURSELF**

There are people who can provide confidential counselling. They can help you think about your options. They can help you with safety planning, whether you decide to stay with a violent partner, or leave. The priority is you and your children's safety.



Call DVConnect, for free confidential assistance on 1800 811 811 (24 hours)

## WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR YOUR CHILDREN

Violence is NEVER your fault.

The person who uses violence is responsible for it, not you. If you are not able to leave, there are things you can do to reduce the effects of violence on your children - they are experiencing the violence too. Be aware that the domestic violence affects your children and talking to you, or a professional counsellor about how they feel, can help them overcome its effects.

You can help your children by:

- Talking to them about their feelings, their worries and their hopes and dreams.
- Supporting them to make healthy relationships with extended family, friends, and teachers.
- Helping them to control their own behaviour by setting a positive example.
- Letting them know that it is okay to have feelings and to talk about them in acceptable ways.
- Playing with them- go for a walk, throw a ball around, sing songs together.
- Being respectful of them and helping them to show respect for others.
- Being interested in them. Support their achievements in school and/or sporting games.
- Telling them often that you love them and that you are proud of them.

Children need their families to protect them. They need reliable and positive relationships where they can find comfort when they are stressed and fearful. They need:

- The violence to stop
- To feel safe
- To be cared for
- To know what is going to happen next in their lives
- To be comforted

## HOW DO YOU KNOW IF IT'S VIOLENCE?

Ask yourself these questions...

- Does my partner regularly shout or swear at me and/or my children?
- Am I sometimes afraid of my partner?
- Does my partner hurt me or my children?
- Does my partner threaten me or my children?
- Does my partner force me to have sex?
- Am I always trying to 'keep the peace' around my partner?
- Am I worried that my partner's actions and words are affecting my child's development?



**If you have answered 'yes' to any of these questions, contact a domestic violence support service. They will provide you with free, non-judgemental, confidential help and advice to keep you and your children safe.**

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SUPPORT SERVICES

A list of domestic violence services in Queensland is available at:

[qlddomesticviolencelink.org.au](http://qlddomesticviolencelink.org.au)

or, if you do not have access to the Internet:

Call Womensline, DVConnect's 24 hour domestic violence telephone service on 1800 811 811.

## STAYING SAFE

Children need safe places to grow into healthy and happy adults. If a home is violent and fearful, it is not safe. Some people stay with a violent partner so their children can have a family, but this can be harmful. Research tells us that parents' fighting can have a worse effect on children's growth than separation or divorce. You may decide to stay with your partner, or you may decide to leave your partner. If you stay or leave, in most cases, your children will still have contact with both parents.

## ABOUT CHILDREN AND DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

Children say domestic violence is when the:

- violence happens in their home
- hurt is deliberate
- person who is hurt is someone they love
- person who is using the violence is someone they trust

What children think when violence is going on around them:

- I try not to be seen. I will hide under the bed or in a cupboard.
- I'm worried about my mum. I'm worried that she'll be killed.
- I feel helpless. I can't do anything to make it stop.
- I love both my parents, but when I see one hurting the other I'm confused.
- I'm worried that my friends will find out about what happens in our house.



Most children don't tell their 'secret' to anyone because they are ashamed of others knowing this information would only make them feel worse. Children think that it is their fault. They may act to try to stop the violence.

Living with domestic and family violence may teach children that:

- It is okay to be aggressive and use force to get what they want.
- You can't rely on adults.
- It is okay to disrespect women.

When children see or hear violence around them they may:

- Find it hard to make or keep friends
- Have problems with their behaviour at home and school
- Have trouble learning
- Have temper tantrums and be aggressive
- Be sick a lot (headaches, stomach aches)
- Not be able to sleep (sometimes with nightmares and bedwetting)
- Be depressed or anxious
- Feel guilty or angry

Children living with domestic and family violence may:

- want to support the parent who is being abused but they love the parent who is the abuser
- blame alcohol, stress or their own bad behaviour for the violence- not the parent who is the abuser
- worry about what they could have done to prevent the violence
- lose faith in the abused parent for being unable to protect them



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