

Young People

PARENTS: WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

This fact sheet for parents is about the effects of domestic and family violence on young people. It gives you some ideas to protect your children from its effects. There are services who can help you and your children.

As adolescents, young people start to decide what values they need to guide their lives.

You and your child/ren have a right to live safely.

Violence is never your fault.

Violence is an act that hurts you or your child/ren.

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.

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

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 YOUNG PEOPLE AND DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

During the teenage years your children will start to decide what values they need to guide their lives. They want to be independent and may change their style of clothes and hair, their friendship group and activities. Yet they still need help through this life stage to grow into strong, respectful and confident adults. They need reliable people around them whom they can trust and respect, and who can help them to understand their limits. If they see you being abused, they may use violence in their own adult relationships. As they grow into adults, your son/ daughter may want to be free of an unsafe home environment. Many young people in youth accommodation services report domestic violence in their families.

While you are watching your teenager grow into a young woman or man they are also watching you, and learning what it looks like to be an adult. You provide the most important influence in their life. Young people can blame themselves for the violence at home. They may be drawn into shaming and scaring others by the abusive parent.



What do young people think when domestic violence is happening around them?

- I want to do something to make the violence stop.
- I can't focus at school because I'm worried about what it will be like when I get home.
- I feel like I'm invisible. When the violence stops no one talks about it. It's like nothing has happened.
- Why can't I have a 'normal' family like my friends?
- I don't want to go home at night. At least at school I know what to expect.
- I just want someone to love me, to be my friend, to help me.
- I hope that no one at school finds out what happens in our house.
- I'm worried that I will turn out to be an abuser/ abused person too.

If you are being abused, your daughter/ son may

- Feel angry- either at you for not leaving, or at the abuser.
- Be ashamed- wanting to keep their family 'secret' away from their friends.
- Take on a care-taker role- wanting to protect you and their brothers and sisters.
- Be scared- for themselves, you and other family members.
- Become depressed- unable to see how their lives will ever improve.
- Behave badly- this is their way of expressing anger, frustration, or they may model the behaviour they have seen in their home.
- Abuse alcohol or other drugs- to escape what is happening at home.
- Use violence in their own relationships- believing that it is ok to be violent to their partner.
- Have troubles at school- due to being tired, not motivated or absent.

Young people need support inside and outside of their family to help them see that they have a choice about the type of adult they become. Growing up in a violent home does not mean they will become a victim or abuser.



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