

***Effects of domestic violence on children**

Many children exposed to violence in the home also experience physical abuse.

Children who witness domestic violence or who are themselves victims of abuse are at serious risk for long-term physical and mental health problems.

Children who witness violence between parents may also be at greater risk of being violent in their future relationships.

If you are a parent who is experiencing abuse, it can be difficult to know how to protect your child.

Children in homes where one parent is abused may feel fearful and anxious. They may always be on guard, wondering when the next violent event will happen. This can cause them to react in different ways, depending on their age.

When you leave an abusive relationship you may be helping your children feel safer and making them less likely to tolerate abuse as they get older.

**Source: Office Women's Health*

#KnowTheSignsBreakThePattern

Compared with other kids, those who have witnessed domestic violence experience a far greater incidence of insomnia, bed wetting, verbal, motor, and cognitive issues, learning difficulties, self-harm, aggressive and antisocial behaviors, depression and anxiety, as well as, most troubling, adult domestic violence, with boys often becoming offenders, victims, or both, and girls more likely to become victims.

(Brown and Bzostek, 2003)



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BREAK THE PATTERN



I Have Children - What Should I Do?



What Should I Do?

When you're a parent in an unhealthy or abusive relationship, it makes a difficult situation even harder. Not only do you have to worry about your safety, but you also have to consider your child's well-being.

Witnessing domestic and dating violence can have a huge impact on children, both physically and psychologically.

They may grow up believing that domestic violence is normal and mimic the behaviors they witnessed in their parents' relationship.

If you're involved in an unhealthy or abusive relationship, it's important to get help.



What Can I Do?

Making the decision to leave is very hard, especially if you have a child with your abusive partner. Whether or not you are ready or able to leave, you can take steps to help keep you and your child safe. If you stay, ...

- Prepare a safety plan with your child and try to follow it whenever possible. Arrange a safe place for your children to go and plan a code word to let them know when they should leave and where to get help. It's also important to tell them that their job is to stay safe, not protect you.
- Make sure your child knows the abuse isn't their fault and violence is never ok, even when someone they love is being abusive.
- Pack a bag you can take with you in an emergency -- be sure to include important documentation for you and your children.

- Include anything your kids may need (formula, medicine, diapers, birth certificates, immigration papers). Keep the bag hidden in a safe place or leave it with someone you trust.
- Memorize all important numbers in case you have to leave without your phone.

If You Leave

- Talk to a lawyer about the custody laws where you live. Consider getting a protection/restraining/no-contact order. It may award you temporary custody of your children and help with your longer term plans.
- Call the police if you and your children need immediate protection. Be sure to get a police report to use as evidence in your custody case.

If you can't leave your partner because you fear for your or your child's safety, you should contact a resource in your community to discuss your options right away.