



Kalamazoo CAN
(269) 552-4430
www.KalamazooCAN.com

Family Violence and Child Abuse

Domestic violence is a widespread problem, with long-term consequences to the family members. Each year millions of children are affected by being direct targets of violence or witnessing violence in their homes. **There are strong connections between domestic violence and child abuse.** Conducted studies of children at battered women's shelters found that almost 70% of the children were victims of abuse themselves.

There are a lot of aspects in a child's personality that are affected by domestic violence. Many develop serious physical and mental health problems that can last lifetime. Here are common feelings that children experience in a home with domestic violence:

Constant Fear and Tension

Witnessing or experiencing anger and abusive behavior creates, in many cases, a permanent sense of being afraid, not being able to trust anybody.

Confusion

Living and growing up in a home with violence, many children believe that hitting is a way of dealing with problems. While at school, they are taught that hitting is wrong, and not the appropriate problem solving method.

Despair

Often times children feel somehow responsible for the "fights." At the same time they feel powerless to prevent them, or escape them.

Remoteness

It is common that an abusive parent shuts off the family from the outside world. In such cases children tend to withdraw themselves from friends and other adults; their abilities to socialize and communicate suffer greatly.

What is Domestic Violence?

Domestic violence is a pattern of assaultive behavior that includes:

- Physical attacks (slapping, hitting, burning, etc.)
- Sexual attacks (rape, incest etc.)
- Emotional attacks (threats, insults, harassment, etc.)

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Domestic violence is also an economic coercion that adults or adolescents use against their intimate partners. It is observed that people who are violent often: have witnessed or suffered abuse as children; have low self-esteem (using violence makes them feel important); abuse alcohol or other drugs (a very common factor of domestic violence); have mental or emotional problems.

Violence in the family affects people from every income level, race and religion. It is a crime in our society, but it can be prevented.

What You Can Do to Prevent or Reduce Family Violence

Any type of prevention effort that reaches families can greatly reduce the problem of domestic violence. Some of those prevention methods include:

- Educating the public and the extent of the problem.
- Encouraging attempts for reducing violence in media.
- Reporting cases of abuse and family violence to the proper authorities or the police.

Positive influence can help a child overcome some negative consequences of being a victim of domestic violence. Certain approaches have shown a great effect on the problem:

- Family Support: Being close to siblings or other relatives helps children feel loved.
- Community Support: Organizing programs that involve youth activities gives children a chance to learn new skills.
- Group therapy can provide great support for people that share similar experiences.
- Individual therapy can help victims to rebuild their self-esteem, learn to trust again.

Tips for Helping a Child from a Violent Home

Encourage socializing. Create opportunities for play with other children.

Teach them how to deal with anger. Help the child stay in control when she/he is frustrated. Offer some ways like breathing slowly, counting to twenty, etc.

Encourage healthy self-expression. Teach the child to express feelings through talking, writing, drawing, not violence.

Teach conflict resolution skills, such as how to stop fighting, think of a solution and get help if the solution does not work out.

Help rebuild self-esteem. Encourage the child to believe that he/she deserves to be loved. Remind that, he/ she is capable of many great things. Praise the child often for the small achievements.

To learn the physical indicators and warning signs of child abuse, visit the “Resources” section of our website at www.KalamazooCAN.com. Or call our office at (269) 552-4430.

Important: If you suspect a case of child abuse or neglect, please call Child Protective Services immediately at (269) 337-5046. Don't wait. Make this confidential call now.