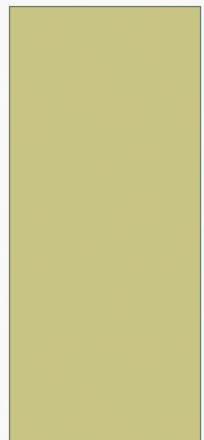


EFFECTS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON KIDS



TRAINING OBJECTIVES

- How children are effected by domestic violence
- Different ages/stages and how DV impacts a child's development
- Parent/child bond
- Why a victim may stay in an abusive relationship
- The cycle of domestic violence
- AWAIC services

STATISTICS ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- Out of every 100 women who live in Anchorage:
 - 39 experience domestic violence
 - 32 experience sexual abuse
 - 48 experience one or the other
- Men also experience domestic violence
- It can be estimated that half of the children in Anchorage have experienced domestic violence in the home

HOW CHILDREN ARE EXPOSED TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:

- Seeing their parent assaulted and demeaned
- Hearing loud conflict and violence
- Seeing the aftermath
- Learning about what happened to their parent
- Being abused themselves
- Being used to abuse the other parent

HOW CHILDREN MIGHT BE “USED” BY AN ABUSIVE PARENT

- Suggesting a child's misbehavior is the reason the other parent must be abused
- Encouraging the children to abuse the other parent.
- Threatening violence against the children
- Talking inappropriately to children about the other parent's behavior
- Prolonged court proceedings about custody when the abuser has previously shown little interest in the children
- Holding the children hostage or abducting them

- Children are not “witnesses” of domestic violence

DURING VIOLENT INCIDENTS

- Children may try to “referee”
- They may try to rescue their parent
- They might deflect the abuser’s attention onto themselves
- They might take care of younger siblings
- They might try to get help from the neighbors or the police
- They might try to hide

BETWEEN INCIDENTS

- Children may be preoccupied with when the next incident will occur
- They may try to change things about themselves so that the abuse stops
- They are constantly keeping an eye out for triggers, which may be alcohol or drugs in the house, a messy house, bad grades, anything that the abuser has used as an excuse to abuse.

THE EFFECTS OF DV ON INFANTS AND TODDLERS

- Babies cannot understand exactly what is happening between adults but they can feel the emotions
- An infant's brain is significantly affected by stress and may even form differently

WHAT AN INFANT OR TODDLER MAY EXPERIENCE

- Loud noises such banging and yelling
- A distracted, tense, unhappy, socially isolated parent
- And an angry, self-centered, inconsistent parent figure
- Chance of being physically injured, either by accident or maltreatment
- Compromised nutrition and health if financial abuse restricts money to buy formula, vitamins, diapers, home safety devices etc...

HOW VIOLENCE CAN SHAPE AN INFANT'S DEVELOPMENT

Key aspects of development in infants

- Take in information from the world through 5 senses
- Need secure attachments
- Become more active explorers of the world through play
- Learn about social interactions and relationships from what they see and hear in the family

Potential impact of domestic violence

- Loud noises, vivid visual image associated with violence can be distressing
- Parents may not consistently respond to infant's needs
- Fear and instability inhibit exploration and play. Their play may begin to imitate the fighting they see
- Learn about aggression in observed interactions

THE EFFECTS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON PRE-SCHOOLERS

- Worry about being hurt and may have nightmares about being hurt
- Believe they caused the “fight” by something they did
- Hope that a TV character or super hero will come and save them
- Try and stop the “fight” by, for example, yelling
- “Tune out” the noise by focusing on something else like toys or television
- Be distressed when Mommy is upset but feel better when she seems okay again
- Be confused if Daddy is gone and worry that Mommy may leave too

HOW VIOLENCE AT HOME CAN SHAPE A PRE-SCHOOLERS DEVELOPMENT

Key aspects of development

- Learn how to express angry feelings and other emotions in appropriate ways
- Experience and observations form meaning in their world
- Outcome is more salient than the process
- Think in egocentric ways
- Form ideas about gender roles based on social messages
- Increase physical independence

Potential impact of domestic violence

- Learn unhealthy ways to express anger and aggression
- Confused by conflicting messages (what they see vs. what they are told)
- May be distressed by perceived unfairness, father's arrest and/or trip to the shelter
- May attribute violence to something they did
- Learn gender roles associated with violence and victimization
- Instability may inhibit independence; may see regressive behaviors

THE EFFECTS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON SCHOOL AGED CHILDREN

- Their understanding of abuse against their parent gets more sophisticated
- They think that the “fights” are caused by stress, family finances, alcohol, or whatever else their parents argue about
- They judge the “fights” by their perception of fairness. They decide who they feel are to blame for the “fight.”

HOW VIOLENCE AT HOME SHAPES A SCHOOL AGED CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Key aspects of development

- Increased emotional awareness for self and others
- Increased complexity in thinking about right and wrong; emphasis on fairness and intent
- Academic and social success at school has primary impact on self-concept
- Increased influence from outside family (peers at school) and competition with peers has new importance
- Increased same-sex identification

Potential impact of domestic violence

- More aware of their own reactions to violence; more aware of impact on others (mother's safety; dad being arrested)
- Believe the rationalizations heard to justify the violence, (abuser was drunk; victim did something wrong). May try to assess if the fight was fair. Child may blame themselves for the fight.
- Learning may be compromised (child may be distracted); Child may evoke negative feedback, may have poor self-image and act out.
- May use hostile aggression to compete; increased risk for bullying and/or being bullied
- May learn gender roles associated with partner abuse (male as perpetrators, females as victims)

THE EFFECTS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON TEENAGERS

- May be injured by intervening in the violence
- Embarrassment/strong need for privacy/need to project an image of their family as “normal.”
- Responsibility for non-offending parent or younger siblings
- Anger at one or both of their parents
- May start having sex in attempt to find security
- May try to over achieve in attempts to feel acceptance

HOW VIOLENCE AT HOME SHAPES A TEENAGER'S DEVELOPMENT

Key aspect of development

- Increased self of sense and autonomy
- Physical changes brought on by puberty
- Increased peer group influence and desire for acceptance
- Self worth more strongly linked to view of physical attractiveness
- Dating raises issues of sexuality, intimacy, and relationship skills
- Increased capacity for abstract reasoning and broader world view
- Increased influence by media

Potential impact of domestic violence

- Accelerated responsibility and autonomy, premature independence; respectful communication and negotiation may be poorly developed
- May try to stop violence; may use increased size to impose will with physical intimidation or aggression
- Embarrassment of family causes shame, secrecy, and insecurity; might use high risk behaviors to impress peers; may increase time spent away from home
- View of self may be distorted due to abuser's degradation; may experience eating disorders and/or drug and alcohol abuse
- May have difficulty establishing healthy relationships; may fear being abused or being abusive; may either avoid intimacy or have sex prematurely to look for intimacy.
- "all or nothing" interpretations of experiences may be learned and compete with capacity to see "shades of grey" (everyone is a victim or a perpetrator); may be predisposed towards attitudes and values associated with violence and victimization.
- Possibly more influenced by negative media messages re: violent behavior, gender role stereotypes

- ACTIVITY

10 WAYS A CHILD CAN BE CHANGED BY THE VIOLENCE AT HOME

- 1.) Children are denied a good father or mother and positive male or female role model
- 2.) Abuse can harm the parent/child bond
- 3.) Children can develop negative core beliefs about themselves
- 4.) Children can be isolated from helpful sources of support
- 5.) Unhealthy family roles can evolve in homes with domestic violence

10 WAYS, CONT....

- 6.) Abuse destroys a child's view of the world as a safe and predictable place
- 7.) Abuse co-occurs with other stresses and adversities with negative effects
- 8.) A child's style of coping and survival may become problematic
- 9.) Children may adopt some of the rationalizations for abuse
- 10.) Children can believe that victimization is inevitable or normal

UNHEALTHY LESSONS CHILDREN LEARN FROM VIOLENCE

- Violence and threats get you what you want
- A person has two choices- to be the aggressor or be the victim
- Victims are to blame for violence
- When people hurt others, they do not get in trouble
- Women/men are weak, helpless, incompetent or stupid
- Anger causes violence
- People who love you can also hurt you
- Anger should be suppressed because it can get out of control
- Unhealthy, unequal relationships are normal
- Men/women are in charge and should control women's/men's lives
- Women/men don't have the right to be treated with respect

EFFECTS OF COERCIVE CONTROL TACTICS ON THE NON-OFFENDING PARENT

- She/he believes she/he is an inadequate parent
- She/he loses the respect of some or all of the children
- She/he believes the abuser's excuses for abuse and reinforces them with the children
- She/he changes their parenting style in response to the abuser's parenting style
- Her/his capacity to manage is thwarted or overwhelmed
- She/he may use survival strategies with negative effects
- Her/his bond to the children is compromised
- She/he gets trapped in competition for children's loyalties

MYTH VS. REALITY

Myth:

- A parent who loves their children would get out of an abusive relationship to protect them from harm

Reality:

- Some parents stay in an abusive relationship to protect the children

MYTH VS. REALITY

Myth:

- Children will recognize the non-offending parent as a victim and the abuser as the cause of the problems and abuse

Reality

- Children can blame the non-offending parent as much or more than they blame the abusive parent.

MYTH VS. REALITY

Myth:

- Children would hate a parent who abused them or who abused their other parent

Reality:

- Children can love a parent who is abusive to them or their other parent

MYTH VS. REALITY

Myth:

- When the abuser is out of the picture, any family problems the children have will get better

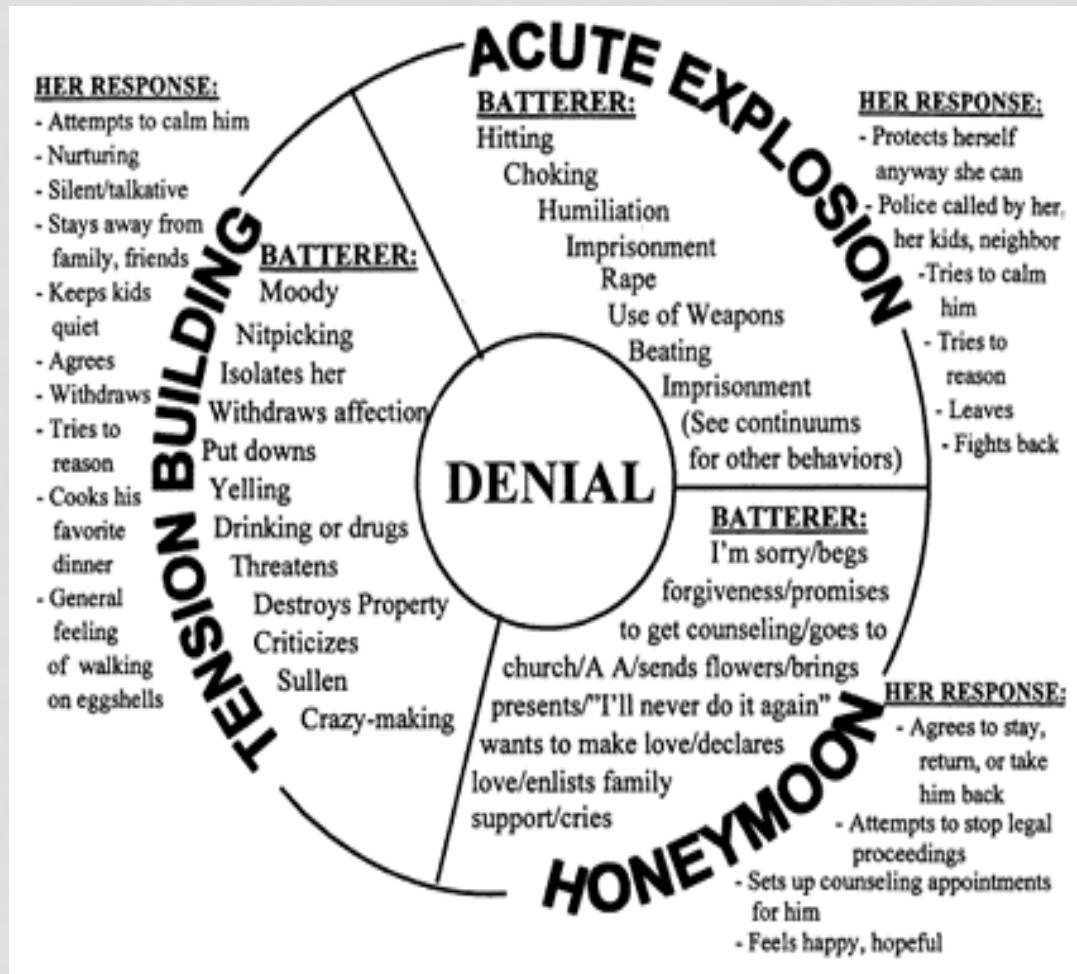
Reality:

- When the abuser leaves the home, children may be more out-of-control, angry, sad or in conflict with others including siblings

UNDERSTANDING WHY THE NON-OFFENDING PARENT STAYS

- Safety
- Isolation
- Culture
- Religion
- Finances
- Poor rental history
- Love

CYCLE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



SUPPORTING NON-OFFENDING PARENTS

- Ending a child's exposure to domestic violence and maltreatment is the single most important way to help children
- Maslow's hierarchy of needs: first assist the family in finding a safe place to live, a source of income, and other features of daily living to meet basic needs and create stability
- Support the non-offending parent by fostering good parenting skills and encouraging them to address any personal issues compromising their parenting (e.g., depression)

ISSUES TO WORK ON WITH PARENT AND CHILDREN TOGETHER

- Mapping out expectations for healthy (non-violent) family relationships
- Strengthening healthy communication and practicing problem-solving
- Establishing safe ways to talk together about the past
- Working to heal and move forward as a family
- Identifying activities and engaging in family “fun.”

AWAIC SERVICES

- 24 hour Crisis line: 272-0100
- 30 day shelter
- Case management
- Groups for women and children
- Rapid re-housing program
- Counseling

REFERENCES

- Baker, L. and Cunningham, A. (2007) *Little Eyes, Little Ears: How Violence Against a Mother Shapes Children as They Grow*. Retrieved from www.lfcc.on.ca/little_eyes_little_ears.html