



## Impact of Domestic Violence on Children

Children are indirect victims of intimate partner violence. Millions of children are exposed to incidents of domestic violence every year. *Over half of the female victims of domestic violence live in households with children under the age of 12.*<sup>i</sup>

Many victims of domestic violence think that their children are not aware of the violence because they do not see it happen. However, children are keenly aware of the abuse. *Research indicates that 80 to 90 percent of children living in homes where there is domestic violence are aware of the abuse.*<sup>ii</sup>

Parents who experience abuse go to great lengths to protect their children from abuse and adverse effects of domestic violence. Despite these efforts, domestic violence continues to have a huge impact on children's well-being. *In a study of more than 6000 families in the United States, half of the men who physically abused their wives also abused their children.*<sup>iii</sup> *Older children are frequently assaulted when they intervene to defend or protect the victim.*<sup>iv</sup>

Witnessing and experiencing abuse as a child can have a lifelong impact. *A child's exposure to domestic violence is the strongest risk factor for transmitting violent behavior from one generation to the next.<sup>v</sup> Childhood abuse and trauma has a high correlation to both emotional and physical problems in adulthood, including tobacco use, substance abuse, obesity, cancer, heart disease, depression and a higher risk for unintended pregnancy.*<sup>vi</sup>

With proper intervention and treatment, the cycle of violence can be stopped and the wounds of childhood trauma can be healed. Leaving the abusive relationship is a step towards healing for your children, but counseling and therapy are as important for children as it is for victims.

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<sup>i</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, *Violence by Intimates: Analysis of Data on Crimes by Current or Former Spouses, Boyfriends, and Girlfriends*, March 1998

<sup>ii</sup> Pagelow, M., "Effects of Domestic Violence on Children," *Mediation Quarterly*, 1990

<sup>iii</sup> Strauss, Murray A., Gelles, Richard J., Smith, Christine. 1990. *Physical Violence in American Families: Risk Factors and Adaptations to Violence in 8,145 Families*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.

<sup>iv</sup> Hilberman and Munson, "Sixty Battered Women," *Victimology: An International Journal*, 1977-78

<sup>v</sup> American Psychological Association, *Violence and the Family: Report of the APA Presidential Task Force on Violence and the Family*, 1996

<sup>vi</sup> Jaffe, P. and Sudermann, M., "Child Witness of Women Abuse: Research and Community Responses," in Stith, S. and Straus, M., *Understanding Partner Violence: Prevalence, Causes, Consequences, and Solutions*. Families in Focus Services, Vol. II Minneapolis, MN: National Council on Family Relations, 1995.

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**Please call the 24-Hour National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or TTY 1-800-787-3224 to discuss your concerns and questions.**