



Domestic Violence and Young Children

Domestic violence refers to abuse that occurs within an intimate relationship. Domestic violence can happen in any intimate relationship, regardless of income level, marital status, lifestyle choices, or living arrangements. In fact, statistics show that 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men have experienced violence in their relationships.

Both men and women can be either the person being abused or the person who is being abusive. There are a lot of different kinds of abuse that can be considered domestic violence. Some of these are physical, emotional, sexual, financial, or spiritual abuse.

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Are Young Children Impacted by Domestic Violence?

Yes. Young children are very vulnerable when exposed to domestic violence. They are smaller and unable to protect themselves. They are also more likely to be home when conflict is occurring. Very young children may not have the ability to ask for help or talk about the violence they are witnessing. Young children also have few relationships and supports outside of their home.

Young children can be impacted by domestic violence when they:

- Directly see and/or hear the violence occur
- See the aftermath, such as injuries or depression
- Are threatened as part of the abuse
- Become confidants or caregivers for their parent
- Have their family break apart
- Are victims of abuse themselves

What Are Some Ways Children are Impacted by Domestic Violence?

- Children at greater risk of being abused themselves
- Poor family functioning; family breakdown
- Parent(s) may experience mental health concerns as a result of the abuse
- Young children may not understand what is happening, why it is happening, and who is at fault
- Violence can become normal for the child
- Loss of behavioural, social, and emotional gains that they have made already
- Young children learn about gender roles, relationships, love and trust within their family
- Children may have problems forming relationships with adults and other children