

The impact of violence on kids

Living with domestic violence can cause physical and emotional harm to children and young people.

Violence and the threat of violence at home can create fear and can destroy normal family functioning. Any form of violence or threat of violence in the home also affects children. Children and young people don't have to see the violence to be affected by it.

For optimal development, children and young people need to grow up in a secure and nurturing environment. Where domestic or family violence exists, the home is not safe or secure and children are scared about what might happen to them and the people they love.

Studies show that children who have witnessed domestic violence and or exposed to anger and fear, are more likely to:

- show aggressive behaviour e.g. bullying
- develop phobias and insomnia
- experience anxiety
- show symptoms of depression
- have diminished self esteem
- poor concentration at school and problem solving skills
- have reduced social competence skills, including low levels of empathy
- show emotional distress
- have physical complaints
- 'regressive' symptoms such as increased bedwetting or delayed language development
- more anxiety over separation from parents may affect children's ability to learn to get along with other children
- repeat the violence in their own families, or choose partners who are violent

Seek help for you and your children if you are exposed to domestic violence – it does impact on your children's future.

Where to find help

- Kids' Help Line 1800 551 800
- Domestic Violence Line 1800 656 463

Both lines are open 24 hours, 7 days. Interpreters are available.

Bibliography

Department of Community Services: Domestic and Family Violence (Osofsky, 1995, cited in Margolin & Gordis, 2000).

