



# Children's Issues

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How to explain to a child ...

- What is Domestic Violence?
- What is Sexual Assault?
- Important Phone Numbers
- Questions and Concerns for Mom

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## What to tell a child . . .

***You Have the Right to Be Safe!***

***in your home...***

- Don't Try To Get In The Middle Of The Abuse!  
It is not safe for you to try to stop the abuse or to protect your mom. Remember, it is your job to keep yourself safe!
- If You Can Get To A Phone Safely, Call 9-1-1!  
Tell the police where you are and what is happening. The person on the phone will talk to you until the police arrive. Remember, you don't need money if you use a pay phone.
- Get To A Safe Place!  
Practice how to get out of your home safely. Which doors, windows, or stairs would be best? Which neighbor can you go to for help?
- It's Not Your Fault!  
Remember, the violence against you or against your mom is never your fault. No one has the right to hurt or threaten you.

***Are you Afraid...***

- At home?
- At school?

## **Tell a safe person!**

If you need to talk with a safe person about any of these problems, tell:

- A Teacher
- A Crisis Advocate
- Your School Police Officer
- Someone in your Family
- Your School Counselor
- Someone at your Place of Worship
- Another Person you Trust

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# Children

## What is Domestic Violence?

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- ✦ Domestic Violence is when one person uses hitting, hurting, name-calling, or threats to make another person do what they say. It happens with people that are married, divorced, dating or living together.
- ✦ Domestic violence happens because one person believes they have a right to have power and control over their partner. It is not about anger, alcohol or drugs.
- ✦ Domestic violence occurs in every part of our society.

## What Is Sexual Assault?

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- ✦ Sexual assault is sexual contact with anyone who cannot or does not give informed consent.
- ✦ Sexual assault is any touching in any place or in any way that makes you feel uncomfortable.
- ✦ It is OK to say NO if someone tries to touch you in ways that make you feel frightened, confused or uncomfortable.
- ✦ It is not your fault if someone touches you in a way that is not OK. You don't have to keep secrets about those touches.
- ✦ Some secrets are good secrets. An example of a good secret is a birthday gift. A bad secret would be if someone touched you and then told you not to tell anyone.
- ✦ It is never too late to ask for help. You can keep asking until you get the help you need.

## Important Phone Numbers

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Police	911
Alcohol & Drug Abuse Hotline	24 hours 1 (800) 821-4357
Child Abuse Reporting	(503) 378-6704
HIV/AIDS Hotline	24 hours 1 (800) 342-2437
HOME Youth Resource Center	(503) 391-6428
HOST Teen Shelter	24 hours (503) 581-5535
Mano a Mano	(503) 363-1895
Planned Parenthood Hotline	1 (800) 230-7526
Runaway Hotline	24 hours 1 (800) 621-4000
Suicide Hotline	24 hours 1 (800) 784-2433

# Children

## Questions and Concerns for Mom

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Dear Survivor,

This Section contains information inspired by the questions and concerns of mothers who have fled domestic violence to emergency shelters. Though no mother or child is exactly the same, nor the circumstances which they have endured, many of their questions and concerns are identical.

This section addresses these questions and concerns to hopefully provide answers or guidance for yourself and your children. If there is information you are seeking that is not provided it may be helpful to contact your local domestic violence program for additional support. This is not the fault of yourself or your children. You are not alone.

Information inspired from the questions and concerns of moms who have been there.

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### **Whose fault is it?**

The only person at fault is the abuser. You may want to blame yourself and your children may want to blame you or themselves. However, no matter what you did or said, or didn't do or didn't say, it is not the cause for abuse. The only cause is the abusers personal choice to use abuse to maintain power and control over you and the children.

### **The abuser as a "Bad Guy"**

There may be times when you feel the need to talk negatively about the abuser. Though this may be helpful for you, it is not helpful for your children and they may distance themselves from you. Try to refrain from these comments in front of the children. It is common for your children to still love the abuser and miss him, especially if he is their father. They have a right to feel this way, so acknowledge how they feel. When talking to them about the abuser, don't talk about what a bad person he is, but about the bad choice(s) he made. What were those bad choices? What happened and how do you feel because of those choices? What were some good choices he could have made instead? What would have happened if he had made a good choice? How would you feel if he made a good choice? This helps your children realize that the abuser was/is in control of everything he did and said, while not making him the "Bad Guy". It also reassures them that it's not their fault, nor yours.

### **Your children know**

Children are very aware of what has happened. Even if they were in another room, at school, or asleep, they know what's going on. Children hear it, feel it, and see it. Many children will say they knew "dad wasn't nice to mom", and it scared them.

### **It's okay to cry**

Many moms feel they need to hide their tears so they "look strong and together" in front of their children. Crying is a part of healing and it will not make your children think you are weak. Sometimes letting your children know that you all are a "team" can help create that healing bond so when you need each other you'll know that their support is a safe option. We also recommend outside support such as a domestic violence support group to help you through your healing process.

### **"My children hate me"**

It is common for children to say they "hate you" or are "mad at you". This does not mean they really hate you; they just hate what has happened and how they feel. Being mad at you is a lot safer than being mad at the abuser. Sometimes saying they "hate you" is the only way they can think of to convey their confusion, fear, anger, and pain. This may be a good opportunity to discuss their feelings, answer their questions, or just provide support. It's also okay to let them know that those words are hurtful to you, but you acknowledge how they are feeling.

### **"Will my child be an abuser too?"**

Most children will not. Just because your child witnessed domestic violence DOES NOT mean he/she will be an abuser. This is a myth. Most children want the opposite of what they have witnessed. They strive to end the cycle of abuse and help those who have gone through the same situation.

# Children

## Questions and Concerns for Mom

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### **"But he/she kicks, hits, and yells"**

This does not mean your child is an abuser. When kids feel safe they may act out. Now that they are safe from abuse they feel free to express the confusion, hurt, fear, and any other emotions they may feel. Sometimes they express this by kicking, hitting, or yelling but this doesn't mean your child is an abuser because he/she isn't targeting one person and feels more comfortable expressing emotions in this way right now. Work with them to develop new options for expressing how they feel in ways that don't hurt others. Talk about the good choices they can make instead.

### **Spanking**

Spanking is a temporary solution for a permanent situation. Spanking teaches your children that the bigger and stronger you are, the more power you have. Above all, they learn that it is okay to hit someone. The use of positive discipline is more appropriate and teaches your child how to behave. Reward them for good behavior (compliments, stickers, etc.) and take away privileges or add chores for bad behavior. "Time outs", choices, communication, and your example are also beneficial.

### **"But he's a good father"**

No he's not. Even if he's "good with the kids", he is abusing you (mom) and placing your children in fear. Also, the number one predictor of child abuse is domestic violence. Your children are also in danger from him.