

Everything I Learned,
I Learned From Watching My
Mom And Dad



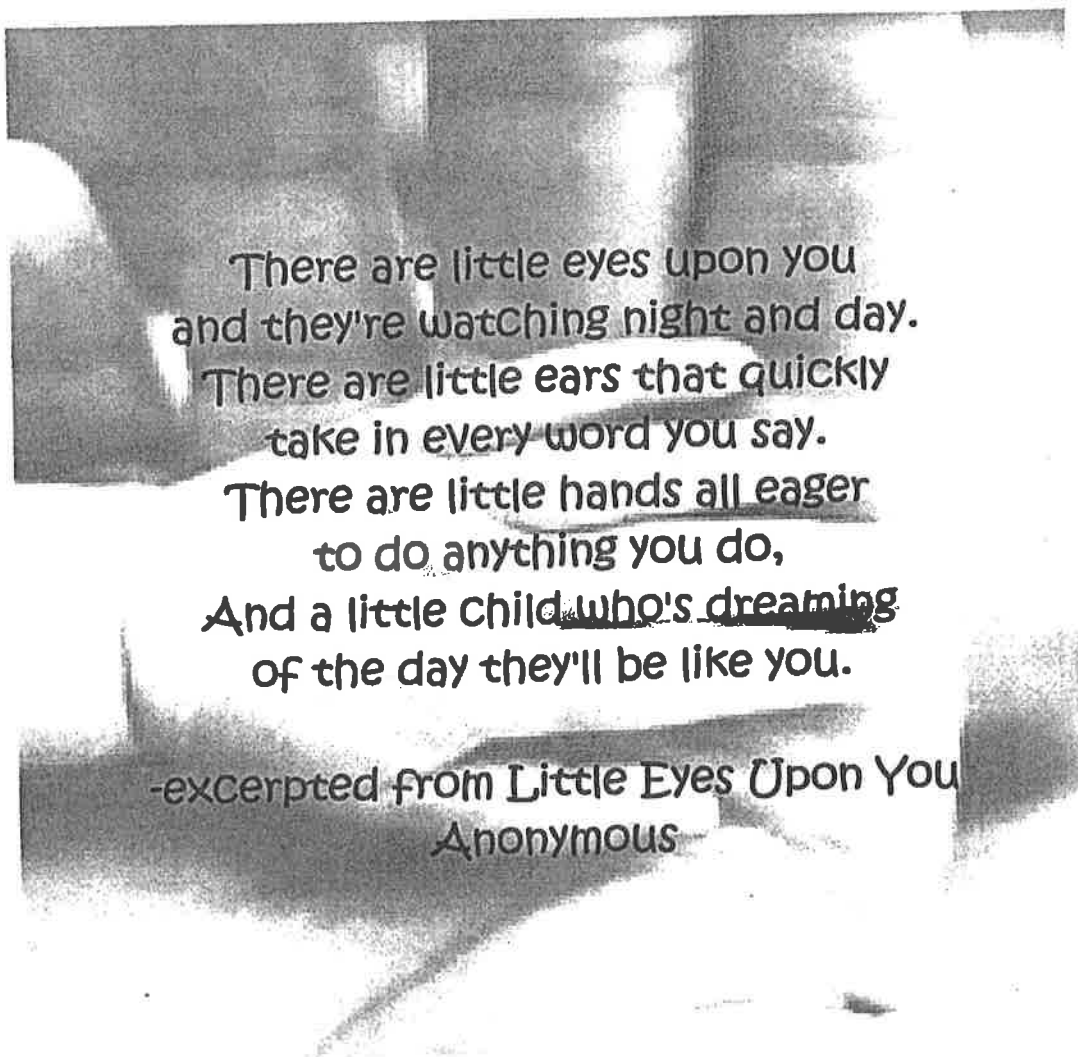
New Mexico Coalition Against Domestic Violence
505.246.9240

National Domestic Violence Hotline
800.799.7233

Services are Free and Confidential

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There are little eyes upon you
and they're watching night and day.
There are little ears that quickly
take in every word you say.
There are little hands all eager
to do anything you do,
And a little child who's dreaming
of the day they'll be like you.

-excerpted from Little Eyes Upon You
Anonymous

Raising children to be healthy, kind, and non-violent adults is the hope and desire of every parent. According to research, violence is a *learned* behavior that is learned at a very young age. In violent homes, children learn that violence is acceptable behavior, and they will learn abusive techniques that they will later use when they become parents. However, young children can be taught non-violence as well. They can learn constructive ways to deal with their frustrations, to handle stress, and to solve their problems. Children who learn these skills early in life are far less likely to grow up to be violent.

**“What a child learns
about violence,
a child learns for life.
Teach carefully.”**



How do young children learn? They learn by watching and observing the people closest to them. You, as a parent or teacher, demonstrate through your behavior what is acceptable in your environment. You are teaching your child, by example, how to live in the world.

We need to understand that people who are abusive usually do not dislike their victims. In fact, abusers often feel genuine love and concern for them. They simply get caught up in a cycle of frustration and violence and do not know how to *change* their behavior.

Sadly, children who witness or experience abuse grow up believing abuse is part of a normal relationship. As they learn what they live, many may grow up to be abusers or abused victims. Domestic violence is a *learned* behavior. Make sure children *never learn* that behavior from *you*. What a child learns about violence, a child learns for life. Teach carefully.



What is Domestic Violence?

What is Domestic Violence?



Domestic violence is a pattern of behaviors that occurs between two intimate partners or former partners to establish power and control. It may include physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and economic abuse. It may also include threats, isolation, pet abuse, using children, and a variety of other behaviors used to maintain fear, intimidation, and power over one's partner. Domestic violence knows no boundaries. It occurs in intimate relationships, regardless of race, religion, culture, or socioeconomic status.

**"... domestic violence
rarely has
only *one* victim"**

Domestic violence tends to occur most frequently among women between the ages of 16 and 30. Often young children are present when their mothers are beaten by their husbands or boyfriends. Children are often described as the "*forgotten victims*" of domestic violence. Children are affected not only by directly witnessing abuse but also by living in an environment where their mother - usually the main caregiver - is being repeatedly victimized. Children who live in a home where the mother is being abused are at a greater risk of being abused themselves.



How are children affected by Domestic Violence?



Children witness violence in the home in a number of different ways. They may see or hear the abusive incident or be used or even involved in the violence.

"When the yelling starts,
I have to take my brother upstairs
and shut the door."

They sense the tension prior to the abuse and experience the aftermath. Even when the parents believe that children are unaware of what is happening, the children can often give detailed accounts of the events.

In addition to the physical violence often found in abusive relationships, children will almost certainly be exposed to frequent emotional abuse in the form of name-calling, accusations, and threats made by the abuser.

If a child is being emotionally abused, his/her self-esteem can be affected and diminished. Inconsistent or mixed messages, such as being favored one moment and put-down the next, can also take a toll on the emotional health of a child. Aside from possible physical involvement or direct abuse, these emotionally damaging actions have a detrimental and often long-lasting effect on children.

How

are children affected?



What are the effects?

Effects on Children Who Live With Domestic Violence

Physical Effects

"My tummy was always in a knot."

- ⊗ somatic complaints, headaches, and stomach aches
- ⊗ nervousness, anxiousness, and short attention span
- ⊗ tired and lethargic
- ⊗ frequently ill
- ⊗ poor personal hygiene
- ⊗ regression in their development (thumb sucking, etc.)
- ⊗ eating disorders
- ⊗ substance or alcohol abuse

Emotional Effects

"If only I did my homework. Dad wouldn't have hit Mom."

- ⊗ shame, guilt, and self blame
- ⊗ crying
- ⊗ anxiety and sadness
- ⊗ confusion
- ⊗ anger and depression
- ⊗ suicidal behavior
- ⊗ nightmares
- ⊗ fears and phobias
- ⊗ low self-esteem

Behavioral Effects

"My first concern was for my mother. I was very protective of her."

- ⊗ acts as a substitute parent or caretaker
- ⊗ increased aggressive behavior, angry outbursts
- ⊗ withdrawing into or isolating themselves
- ⊗ bedwetting and nightmares
- ⊗ difficulties at home or at school
- ⊗ rigid defenses (defensive, aloof, etc.)
- ⊗ excessive attention seeking

Social Effects

"You can't tell me what to do."

- ⊗ difficulty in trusting, especially adults
- ⊗ poor anger management
- ⊗ involved in exploitative relationships
- ⊗ excessive social involvement (to avoid home life)
- ⊗ might be passive with peers, or might bully peers
- ⊗ isolation from friends and relatives
- ⊗ play with peers gets exceedingly rough

The Law

Under the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, child abuse and neglect is

- ✓ Any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker that results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse, or exploitation;
- ✓ An act or failure to act that presents an imminent risk of serious harm.



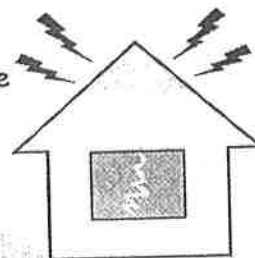
How a Child Feels...



Did you know...

- In New Mexico, there were 25,644 domestic violence incidents in 2003.
- There were 16,960 new clients seeking services with domestic violence service providers across the state.
- 5,757 of those new clients were children.
- There were 3,804 children (under the age of 11) present at the scene of domestic violence incidents in New Mexico.
 - 22% of children experienced *physical* abuse.
 - 5% experienced *sexual* abuse.
 - 37% of children *received emergency shelter*.
 - 23% received counseling services
 - A child was present in 1 out of every 1.8 adult victim cases.
- Boys who witness family violence are *more likely* to batter their female partners as adults.
- Girls who witness their mother's abuse have a *higher rate* of being battered as adults.

* Caponera, Betty, comp. *Domestic Violence Trends in New Mexico, 2001-2003*



Tips for Parents

What you can do to help your child

- ☺ Tell them that it is *not their fault*.
- ☺ Encourage them to talk and express their feelings.
- ☺ Reinforce that violence is unacceptable.
- ☺ Teach them non-violent ways to solve their problems.
- ☺ Provide experiences for the development of a healthy self-esteem.
- ☺ Teach your child about personal safety plans (see Safety Planning section).
- ☺ Seek counseling for you and your child.

**"The cycle of violence must be broken
before today's abused child
becomes tomorrow's abuser."**

The Attorney General's Task Force on Family Violence (1984)

Tips for Being a Nurturing Parent

- ☺ Help your children feel loved and secure.
- ☺ Make sure your children know you love them, even if they do something wrong.
- ☺ Encourage your children.
- ☺ Praise their achievements and talents.
- ☺ Spend time with your children.
- ☺ Talk with your children.
- ☺ Do things together that the whole family enjoys.

Seek help if you need it

If you think stress is affecting the way you treat your child, please do one of the following:

- ☺ **Talk to someone** - tell a friend or a leader in your faith community.
- ☺ **Get counseling** - seek help from a professional to learn healthy ways to communicate effectively.
- ☺ **Take a parenting class** - parenting classes can give you the skills that you need to raise a happy and healthy child.
- ☺ **Accept help** - and don't be afraid to ask for it!



Information for Mothers

You are *not* to blame.

You may be feeling responsible for your partner's violence and for the impact their behavior has on your kids. Remember, you are *not* to blame for his or her violence and you are *not* responsible for the effect that their abuse has on your children.

"My partner hits me, but he (or she) is good to the kids."

By abusing you, the abuser is *not* being "good to the kids." Showing attention and/or affection to your children doesn't make up for denying them a child's right to a safe and happy childhood.

You need help, so you can help your children.

No matter how caring a parent you are, at some level your ability to do your best for your children will be affected by your partner's abuse. Sadly, this is the time when your children need you the most. Until you can get the help you need to make yourself feel safe, your children cannot feel safe or be happy knowing that their mother is being hurt.



***"Sticks and stones may break my bones,
but words will never hurt me."***

Do you remember this childhood chant? Negative words *can* hurt and they do, but positive words can also help!

Here are some examples to make your kids feel great!

That's great!

I love you.

Let's talk about you.

I believe you can do it.

Good job!

You're very special.

You make me proud.

Believe in yourself.



A Child's Safety Plan

Below are some tips in preparing a child in case of a dangerous situation.



If your parents are fighting, stay out of the room where the fighting is happening.



Who can you call for help?
Write down names and phone numbers of people you trust.



Is there a safe place outside your house where you can go?



Make a list of all the things you can do that will make you feel better when your family is fighting.



Safety Planning

Safety Planning



 My Important Phone Number

My phone number _____

The police _____

A neighbor, friend or relative's number _____

If you are in danger, Call 9 1 1.

Remember, when your family is fighting, it is
NOT your fault!



Who do I call for help?

Where to get help in New Mexico

New Mexico Coalition Against Domestic Violence
☎ (505) 246-9240 or 1-800-799-7233
Domestic Violence Legal Resources
☎ 1-877-974-3400

*Please get help.
If not for yourself, do it for your children.*



All that time you heard him yell.
He hit you and you fell.
You rose up and came here.
And soon you knew that freedom was near.
Now you know you got what it takes.
To learn about freedom and what it makes.

Written by a 9-year old girl who witnessed family violence
Excerpted from Children's Advocate Magazine