



Talking To Children:

Family Violence

As adults, we often think children are too young to understand or even notice when another family member is being abused.



We may think that talking to our child about the abuse will only confuse them or cause them to feel sad.



We may think we are protecting them by ignoring or avoiding the issue.



We may think that our children are not directly affected because they are in bed or outside playing.

Research has found that most children living in homes where violence does occur, **are very aware and often**

fearful.

By not talking about the incident we may be doing a disservice to our children and cause un-necessary:

confusion

worry

stress

guilt

fear

By not talking with our child, they are left on their own to “make sense” of the violence that takes place.

Helping children "make sense" of their world is a difficult task and especially when it come to domestic violence. A child's loyalty among family members is very complex.

We all know, children's perceptions of their world are not always accurate.

Perception develops with maturity, experiences, and with the guidance of caring adults.

Often times children feel as if they are to blame for the violent reactions of the adult.

"If I had only dumped the trash"

"If I had only helped mom cook dinner"

"Its my fault, I didn't remind my sister to clean her room"

If you are not sure your child has witnessed family violence:

Prepare yourself!

☉ **CHILDREN WILL TALK WHEN THEY FEEL SAFE!**

Build that relationship with your child first! Spend quality time with them just listening.

☉ **USE YOUR DAILY ROUTINE AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR INTENTIONAL LISTENING AND TALKING.**

Key in! When children are relaxed and going about their normal routine, they are often more comfortable discussing uncomfortable things.

☉ **ALLOW YOUR CHILD TO LEAD THE DISCUSSION**

If the setting is safe and natural, your child will lead the discussion. Often times a situation on TV or an incident on the playground will be a springboard for talking about the violence within the home.

If you know your child has witnesses family violence:

Follow the above suggestions and, in addition, communicate and follow through with what you say you will do to resolve the situation.

X IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT.

"You did not cause us to do a bad thing. This is an adult problem and not yours, it must be hard for you to understand!"

"And don't be ashamed -- you're not alone. There are other children who may have the same problem in their home but violence is not the solution"

X VIOLENCE IS NOT THE WAY TO SHOW ANGER.

Everyone feels angry sometimes, but talking through problems is the way to make things better.

Hitting or yelling only makes things worse.

X THERE ARE THINGS YOU CAN DO TO BE SAFE.

Don't get caught in a fight. Call 911 if you can do so safely.

Make a plan for your child's safety just in case it should happen again.

There are people who can help. We won't give up! **WE WILL ACT ON THIS!**

X THE POLICE OR GOING TO COURT CAN HELP STOP THE VIOLENCE.

If you have to attend court or the police come to the home, explain that...

"Policemen want to see children safe. They may think it is best for you to stay with friends or at a special shelter for a while until things are straightened out."

"Judges and lawyers may ask hard questions, but court is where people go to make things safer."

Children are victims even when they are not the direct targets of the physical abuse, suffering a host of serious problems that have both immediate and profound long term effects. You can help your child and yourself by seeking assistance with family problems.

For more information contact:



The Center for Parent Involvement (FCPI) was funded by the U.S. Department of Education; Goals 2000, Educate America Act from 1994-1999. Guided by an advisory board of parents and professionals, the FCPI's goal was to tap the power of parents.

The FCPI gathered information on parent needs, coordinated the information, and created a series of resources organized by theme, including fact sheets for parents and professionals, "Beyond the Basics" resources, and resource identification lists. Many of the resources have been translated into Spanish language versions, and every effort has been made to preserve the meaning and flavor of the original English documents. This series of materials provides a wealth of current information for both parents and providers; the complete set of resources can be obtained in PDF format on the Department of Child and Family Studies Website at www.fmhi.usf.edu/cfs/dares/fcpi. The staff of the FCPI are hopeful that their work will continue to help children get ready to learn for many years to come.

The series' themes include:

- Family Empowerment
- Parent Involvement
- Parenting Support
- School Readiness
- Violence in the Lives of Children
- Transition to Kindergarten

The Center was one component of a project led by Hillsborough County Center of Excellence in collaboration with the Department of Child & Family Studies at USF's de la Parte Institute and the Florida Children's Forum. Other project partners include HIPPIY (Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters), Hillsborough County Head Start and Hillsborough County Even Start. For more information about these projects, call 813.974.4612.

Violence & Young Children, Beyond The Basics: Talking To Children:

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