

# How to Help Children Cope With Violence

*Taken a publication of Project Crossroads, a program of the Jamestown Police Department.*



There are alternatives and resources to help children effectively cope with violence they have witnessed and/or experienced. Many children can overcome the negative effects of domestic violence. Do not feel that it is a hopeless situation!!

Here are some things that may be beneficial for a child:

Set up a safety plan. Have a safe place they can go to (a neighbor's house, for example) if a violent episode erupts. If this is not possible, instruct them to find a safe place in the home; tell them to go to a particular room and lock the door. Also, teach them to dial 911.

Tell a child that the abuse was not/is not their fault. This is very important because some children consciously or unconsciously blame themselves for the abuse that happens to their parent and/or themselves.

If you notice any behavioral or emotional disorders, or if you know the child has been physically or sexually abused, counseling is highly recommended. Most researchers feel that even if a child "only" witnessed battering episodes, counseling still should be sought out. There is both free and low-cost counseling available in this area.

Refrain from using corporal punishment. Although spanking is a common form of punishment for children in our society, it only reinforces the fact that violence is an acceptable way to resolve conflicts and problems. Additionally, some parents do "get carried away" when they are angry and physically punish their children at a level that is abusive. There are alternatives to spanking in order to discipline children. Moreover, they will resent you less if you do not spank.

Tell a child that it is normal and natural to become angry or frustrated, but using violence is the wrong way to handle a situation (remembering the exception of cases of self-defense.) Let them know that violent behavior is not acceptable to you.

Ensure non-violent role models for children. If you are a parent, you are a large part of this process, but children may need to have other good role models. Grandparents, teachers, or coaches can serve this function. If you are especially concerned about this issue, there are community-based programs that may fill his/her needs. A mentoring program may be a good alternative or it may be very helpful for a child to take part in activities at the YWCA, YMCA, or Boys and Girls Club.

***The information provided at this site is intended only as a complement to the advice and treatment of your health care professionals.***