

Facts About Child Exposure to Domestic Violence

As we all know, children are exposed to the abusive behavior in a home experiencing domestic violence, and they experience long-term effects of that exposure. The behaviors to which children are exposed include physical aggression such as hitting, kicking, and beating, but also emotional abuse such as humiliation, intimidation, isolation, and controlling actions. As research continues, studies are finding the children do not need to witness violent behaviors for the abusive behavior to take its toll. Being in the same home and being exposed to the behaviors and their aftermath is enough for some children to experience long-term, negative effects.

Prevalence

- According to the National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence, more than 11 percent of children are exposed to some form of family violence in a year.¹
- During a one-year period, 6.6 percent of children are exposed to intimate partner violence.²
- Over a lifetime, 26 percent of children are exposed to at least one form of family violence.³

Children's Responses

- Almost one-half (49.9 percent) of children report yelling for the violence to stop.
- And 43.9 percent of children report trying to get away from the violence at least once.

Health Consequences

- Exposure to IPV in childhood increases the risk of psychological, social, emotional, and behavioral issues including mood and anxiety disorders, substance abuse, school related problems, and PTSD.⁴
- Exposure to IPV also increases the risk of physical, sexual abuse and emotional abuse.⁵

Although the risks and consequences of children being exposed to domestic violence are quite high, there are several factors that can help develop resiliency in children. The Child Welfare Information Gateway factsheet regarding protective factor for children exposed to domestic violence identifies several factors that can help children recover from the exposure.

- Self-regulation skills include having supportive friends; reductions in internalizing problems; better cognitive functioning; and decreases in posttraumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression, and overall behavior problems.⁶
- Problem-solving skills include adaptive functioning and the ability to solve problems.⁷

¹ Hamby, S., et al. OJJDP Juvenile Justice Bulletin, National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence, October 2011.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ C.N. Wathen, HL MacMillan. Children's exposure to intimate partner violence: Impacts and Interventions. *Paediatr Child Health* 2013; 18(8):419-422

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Child Welfare Information Gateway Factsheet: Promoting Protective Factors for Children Exposed to Domestic Violence: A Guide for Practitioners. https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/guide_domesticviolence.pdf

⁷ *Ibid.*

- Positive parenting skills help to increase self-esteem, lower risk of antisocial behavior, and a lower likelihood of running away and of teen pregnancy.⁸
- Positive psychological functioning of the parent/caregiver develops better behavior and mental health outcomes.⁹
- Positive school environment with school-based interventions helps reduce traumatic stress disorder symptoms, depression, psychosocial dysfunction, and physical dating violence.¹⁰

If an agency is considering implementing an intervention program focusing developing the resilience factors in children exposed to domestic violence, [Samsha's National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices](#) has several evidence-based programs designed specifically for this purpose.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*