

THE LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF EXPOSURE TO NEGATIVE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

The more negative incidents that a child is exposed to, the greater the risk that he or she will experience one or more of these problems as an adolescent or adult:

- Heart disease
- Cancer
- Promiscuity
- Skeletal fractures
- Poor self-rated health
- Chronic lung disease
- Engaging in violence
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Depression
- Suicide
- Smoking
- Liver disease
- Drug abuse
- Alcoholism

The long-term consequences of domestic violence can be very severe. The costs include physical, mental, and emotional pain that can last a lifetime, and even lead to life-threatening diseases and behaviors.

WHAT CAN YOU DO? STEPS FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

Understanding that children's minds can be affected for a lifetime by violence is the first step towards helping your children to be healthier and happier. Breaking the cycles of poverty, mental illness, addiction, isolation, depression, and violence begins with parents and caregivers. If you, or someone you know, struggles with domestic violence, or anything else that leads to a chronically stressful, chaotic home, **please contact one of the resources listed in this pamphlet.** Getting help is the first step towards healing and giving your children a better future.



THERE IS HELP

LOCAL RESOURCES

Sacramento Crisis Nursery
(916) 394-2000 (South); (916) 679-3600 (North)
www.kidshome.org

24-hour shelter & emergency childcare for children ages 0-5.
Services are confidential and at no cost for families.

My Sister's House (916) 428-3271 (Crisis Line)
www.my-sisters-house.org

Addresses the unique needs of Asian and Pacific Islander women and children impacted by domestic violence.

A Community for Peace (916) 728-7210 (Crisis Line)
6060 Sunrise Vista Dr., Suite 2340, Citrus Heights, CA 95610
www.acommunityforpeace.org

Provides culturally relevant services to victims of family violence, abuse and trauma, and to their families.
All services are unlimited and free.

WEAVE (916) 920-2952 (Crisis Line)
www.weaveinc.org or (916) 448-2321

Crisis intervention services for women, men, and children who have experienced domestic violence or sexual assault.

Diogenes (916) 369-5447

www.diogenesyouthservices.org or (800) 339-7177
Short term counseling for youth and their families.

Community Legal Services/ Victims Resource Center
www.1800victims.org or (800) 842-8467

Resource and referral information to victims and their families, victim service providers and other victim advocates.

www.211sacramento.org

Information about community programs and services for families and individuals.

www.safestartcenter.org

Extensive listing of resources for children exposed to violence.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND CHILDREN: FACTS AND RESOURCES



"The tragic reality of children growing up in domestic violence is that they end up with mental health problems at a rate higher than children that are actually direct victims of physical abuse." Dr. Bruce Perry



Provided by the
Sacramento Police Department

CHILDREN AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

When a child is exposed to the abuse of a parent, the consequences can be serious and long lasting. Research has shown that children exposed to domestic violence have an increased risk of physical, mental, and emotional illness.

The younger the child, the more serious the consequences can be. Some types of abuse that affect a child are: physical, sexual, or emotional abuse of a parent; overhearing abuse (even behind closed doors).

The effects of being exposed to domestic violence aren't limited to just seeing or hearing the violence. Children are affected by the daily stress, uncertainty, and chaos that follow the abuse. Even if a child isn't a direct witness to the violence, just the knowledge of the abuse can still have a very powerful effect on him or her.

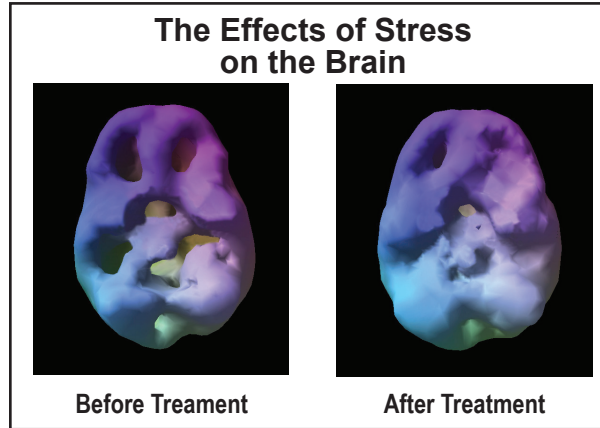
Children as young as infants who have been exposed to domestic violence have shown eating and sleeping problems, decreased responsiveness to adults, and increased crying.

Research confirms that children growing up in a violent home often experience a variety of health and behavior problems, and that **the youngest are the most vulnerable.**

*"The major factor underlying addiction is adverse childhood experiences that have not healed with time and that are overwhelmingly concealed from awareness by shame, secrecy and social taboo."
Dr. Vincent Felitti, MD*

CHRONIC STRESS: EFFECTS ON EARLY BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

How a developing brain is wired (neurobiology) is affected and reinforced by the environment it grows up in. What is going on in the young child's life can determine how the child's brain develops.



Courtesy of Amen Clinics

Research into early brain development shows that the younger the child, the greater the effect that chronic stress and violence has on his or her brain. If an infant grows up in a violent and chaotic household, then the brain will adapt to that violence and chaos, but the child will have a difficult time functioning in everyday life outside of the violent household.

"The younger you are the more sponge-like your brain is... But the very same biological sponginess that rapidly allows us to acquire languages is also the same sponginess that makes younger children more vulnerable to trauma than older children." Dr. Bruce Perry

Learning and thinking skills, emotional, physical, and social development can all be influenced by exposure to violence. Coping successfully with the outside world takes different learning and thinking skills, as well as different emotional and social development.

IMPACT OF TRAUMA ON EARLY BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

Exposure to violence increases the likelihood of children experiencing problems such as: excessive alertness and hyperactivity, headaches, bed wetting, nightmares, sleep disturbances, speech disorders, vomiting and diarrhea, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, developmental delays, attachment disorders, aggressive behaviors, disturbance in peer relationships, asthma, more school nurse visits, suspension from school, frequent absences, and lower grades.

*"Children do not feel safe in a state of emergency. Their energy is consumed by crises, making it extremely difficult for them to learn to read."
Jenny Horsemann*

INFORMATION SOURCES

Making the Connection: Domestic Violence and Public Health

First Impressions: Exposure to Violence and A Child's Developing Brain

The Family Violence Prevention Fund
www.endabuse.org; October, 2004

Childtrauma.org; Childtraumaacademy.org
This site offers free online courses and resource materials on brain development and the effects of trauma on the brain.

*All of our first early experiences are stored in our brains. "Although you have no conscious memory of this part of your childhood, it is these very first experiences that literally become the building blocks for your whole life."
Dr. Bruce Perry*