

## **Children and domestic violence**

- **Children living in violent households**
- **Children coping with family violence**
- **Faithfully disciplining our children**
- **Healthy relationships puppet shows**
- **Children's safety plan**  
Children can participate and learn strategies to keep them safe during violent episodes. Planning is the key.
- **Resources for and about children**

# Children Living in Violent Households

## WAYS OF BEING DRAWN IN

## EFFECTS OF ABUSE

### 0-1 YEAR OLDS

- Seeing it
- Hearing it
- Being awakened by it
- Being injured by it
- Being ripped from mother's arms
- Having toys broken
- Being born prematurely
- Being hit while in mom's arms
- Being thrown

- Physical injury
- Death
- Fright
- Being traumatized by it
- Sleep disturbances
- Eating disturbances
- Being colicky or sick
- Insecurity because of being cared for by a traumatized mom
- Not responsive or cuddly

### 2-4 YEAR OLDS

- Seeing it
- Hearing it
- Trying to stop altercation
- Becoming abused themselves
- Being used as a physical weapon against the victim
- Being interrogated by perpetrator about victims activities
- Being held hostage by perpetrator

- Acting out violently
- Withdrawal
- Trouble with other kids
- Delayed toileting
- Eating problems
- Nervous, jumpy
- Sleep problems
- Insecurity, fear and Depression

### 5-12 YEAR OLDS

- Seeing & hearing it
- Picking 1 parent to defend
- Physically intervening
- Calling the police
- Running to neighbors for help
- Being used as a spy against Mom
- Forced to participate in attack on Mom
- Being physically or sexually abused to control Mom
- Being restricted from contact with others

- Fear & insecurity
- Low self esteem
- Withdrawal/depression
- Running away
- Early drug/alcohol use
- School problems
- Bedwetting
- Sexual activity
- Becoming caretaker of adults
- Being embarrassed by one's family



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## EFFECTS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON OLDER CHILDREN

### WAYS OF BEING DRAWN IN

### EFFECTS OF ABUSE

#### TEENS (BOYS & GIRLS)

- Killing/trying to kill perpetrator
- Trying to stop the abuse
- Hitting parent or siblings
- Becoming physically abused
- Being used as a spy
- Being used as a confidante
- Being coerced by perpetrator to be abusive to mom
- School problems
- Social problems
- Sexual activity
- Shamed & embarrassed
- Truancy
- Superachiever at school
- Tendency to get serious relationships too early to escape home
- Depression
- Suicide
- Alcohol/drug use
- Confusion about gender roles

#### EFFECTS SPECIFIC TO BOYS ONLY

- Learning that males are violent
- Learning to disrespect women
- Using violence in his own relationships
- Confusion or insecurity about being a man
- Attacking parents or siblings

#### EFFECTS SPECIFIC TO GIRLS ONLY

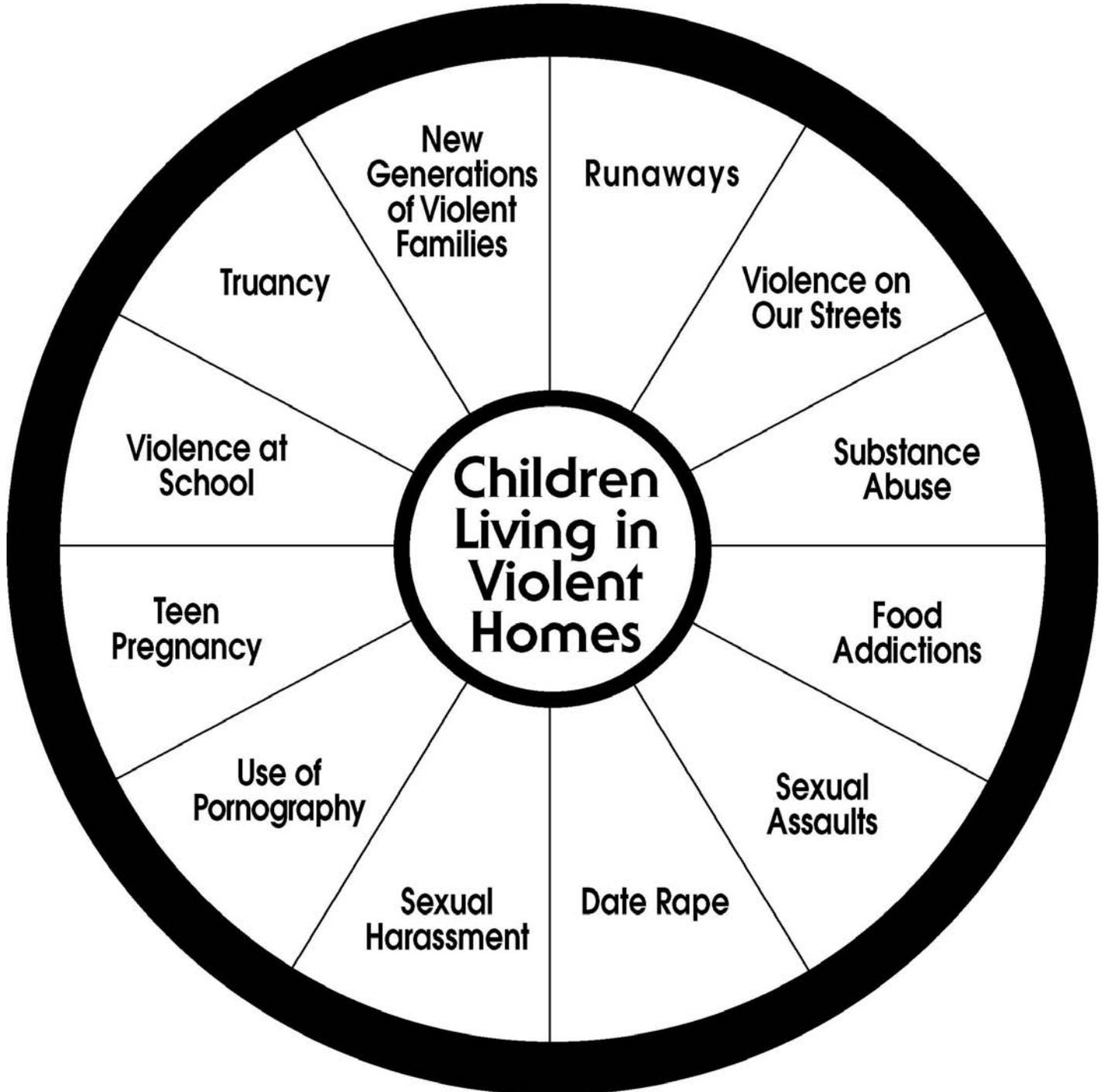
- Learning that male violence is normal
- Learning that women don't get respect
- Accepting violence in her own relationships
- Embarrassed about being female
- Becoming pregnant



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# Children Coping with Family Violence



This, and other domestic violence wheels, have been inspired by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, Duluth, MN

~ See Back Side for Additional Information ~

## **CHILDREN COPING WITH FAMILY VIOLENCE**

### **New Generations of Violent Families...**

Statistics are pretty clear that children use the models they have experienced to form their own families. It is important that they learn that their experience of “home” is not the only experience of family life. Boys who experience domestic violence are more likely to batter their partners as adults, and girls who witness abuse have a high risk of being battered as adults.

### **Runaways...**

Leaving home to avoid the conflict may seem like the only alternative, especially for teens. Teens who have left home and need help can call the National Runaway Switchboard: 800-621-4000.

### **Violence on Our Streets...**

The lack of knowledge and experience in problem resolution can lead children to always react with violence, the only method they have seen.

### **Substance Abuse...**

Children from violent homes have a higher risk of substance abuse. They may attempt to escape their problems by numbing themselves.

### **Food Addictions...**

Food addictions, like anorexia and bulimia, are a way to continue the cycle of violence through self-abuse. These addictions can be a way of controlling at least one aspect of their lives.

### **Sexual Assaults... Date Rape... Use of Pornography...**

Because of their vulnerability, young people may become the targets of others who would prey upon them. They also may become the perpetrators of crimes, using the understanding they have witnessed – power, control and domination.

### **Teen Pregnancy...**

Teens often seek validation and love and can be very vulnerable. They may also deliberately choose to become pregnant and have a child who will fill this void in their lives.

### **Violence at School...**

Without good models for handling conflict, the “skills” witnessed at home get translated onto the schoolyard. For younger children, this may come out as bullying behavior; older youths may consider more violent behaviors.

### **Truancy...**

Children may try to stay home to protect their mom or simply not have the support that is needed to establish regular school attendance. Worrying about survival for themselves or members of their families makes school and learning difficult.

## Faithfully Disciplining Our Children

This article first appeared in the January/February 2004 edition of *Church & Society* (volume 94, Number3)

*“Those who spare the rod hate their children,  
but those who love them are diligent to discipline them.”*

Proverbs 13:24 (NRSV)

This verse from Proverbs is one of those challenging texts in the Bible that has sadly been used to justify spanking and other forms of corporal punishment. One of the most popular supporters of corporal punishment is Dr. James Dobson of the Focus on the Family. His *Dare to Discipline* book (more than 3 million copies sold) was featured in *100 Christian Books that Changed the Century* by William Peterson and Randy Peterson (Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 2002, pp. 161-162). The Focus on the Family’s “syndicated radio programs [are] heard daily on more than 3,000 radio facilities in 12 languages in more than 95 other countries.” (<http://www.family.org/welcome>) He claims that over 200 million people every day hear his radio commentaries (<http://www.family.org/welcome/bios/A0022947.cfm>) While he is very popular and influential, Dobson is not a good biblical interpreter nor supported by the most recent psychological studies.

John J. Collins, the Holmes Professor of Old Testament Criticism & Interpretation at Yale University Divinity School, is an outstanding biblical scholar who has served as the president of both the Society for Biblical Literature (starting in 2002) and the Catholic Biblical Association (1996). His commentary on Proverbs 13:24 is a helpful one:

“We need hardly warn any modern parent that scripture should not be read as inspired child psychology. The proverb is only repeating the accepted cliché of its time. It is typical of all ancient wisdom that learning and education was thought to involve suffering. It is probably true that we learn more from the harder experiences of life than from the easier. However, discipline is only commended for the results it can achieve; it is not a value in itself. The severe parent or teacher, or the scolding preacher, is not necessarily the better one. Wisdom requires that we take account of the best methods of training and communication in our own time and place.” (*Proverbs & Ecclesiastes* by John J. Collins, Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1980, p. 40)

What are the “best methods of training and communication in our own time and place”? Modern human sciences can help us to understand human behavior, as well as to be better parents. People of faith are called to use the best of modern psychology, sociology and other sciences, for these can offer us new insights about ourselves and how we interact with others. The Holy Spirit can work through “secular” sciences to help Christians. John Calvin made this point in the 16th century in his most famous work:

"If we regard the Spirit of God as the sole fountain of truth, we shall neither reject the truth itself, nor despise it wherever it shall appear unless we wish to dishonor the Spirit of God. For by holding the gifts of the Spirit in slight esteem, we condemn and reproach the Spirit himself. But if the Lord has willed that we be helped in physics, dialectic and mathematics, and other like disciplines, by the work and ministry of the ungodly, let us use this assistance. For if we neglect

God's gift freely offered in these arts, we ought to suffer just punishment for our sloths." (*Institutes*, 11.2.15-16). So Christians have an opportunity and even an obligation to learn from disciplines such as psychology, when reflecting on issues such as the spanking of children.

The July 2002 (Vol. 128, No. 4, pp. 539-579) issue of the *Psychological Bulletin*, published by the American Psychological Association (APA) featured a major study by psychologist Elizabeth Thompson Gershoff, PhD, of the National Center for Children in Poverty at Columbia University: "Corporal Punishment by Parents and Associated Child Behaviors and Experiences: A Meta-Analytic and Theoretical Review". Dr. Gershoff did a careful analysis of 88 previous studies with collected data done over 62 years that examined both the positive and negative behaviors in children in relationship to corporal punishment. APA has her complete report available online as well as critiques by others and her responses to those critiques at [http://www.apa.org/journals/bul/press\\_releases/july\\_2002/](http://www.apa.org/journals/bul/press_releases/july_2002/)

Dr. Gershoff looked at a number of behaviors and experiences including immediate compliance, the parent/child relationship, physical abuse from the parent, mental health and aggression. She found "strong associations between corporal punishment and all eleven child behaviors and experiences. Ten of the associations were negative such as with increased child aggression and antisocial behavior. The single desirable association was between corporal punishment and increased immediate compliance on the part of the child." In other words, corporal punishment may make a child obey, but it does so in the context of negative psychological consequences for the child, which may even include child abuse.

The study by Dr. Gershoff states that not all children who are punished with a spanking will necessarily suffer in the long term. One problem, though, is that it is difficult for parents to "draw the line;" most believe they are punishing a child moderately even when the punishment is more severe. Further, greater physical punishment is more likely to lead to aggression and mental health problems. One of the biggest problems with corporal punishment is that it doesn't lead to moral growth in the child; the child simply obeys out of fear. George W. Holden, PhD, of the University of Texas at Austin, concurs with Gershoff's findings and writes that they "reflect the growing body of evidence indicating that corporal punishment does no good and may even cause harm." Holden believes that psychologists [and churches!] should be recommending methods other than spanking, for parents who are seeking to discipline their children.

The best parenting program for churches currently available was developed by Dr. Michael H. Popkin, a psychologist who served as the Director of Child and Family Services at an Atlanta hospital. In 1980, he founded Active Parenting with the purpose of providing parenting programs using the new innovation of educational videotapes. Freda A. Gardner, professor of Christian Education at Princeton Seminary (and later Moderator of the PCUSA General Assembly), wrote the first church guide to this Active Parenting program. Professor Gardner is a gifted teacher who brings a true depth of understanding to her subject as well as practical insights; she was later recognized by her fellow Christian educators in the Association of Presbyterian Christian Educators (APCE) as the "Educator of the Year." The basic Active Parenting programs for parents of elementary school age children have been revised and updated twice, with the most recent edition (*Active Parenting Now*) coming out in 2002.

Popkin gives parents creative, non-violent ways to discipline children. The parent's guide includes a chart showing the difference between logical consequences vs. punishment:

### Logical Consequences Vs. Punishment

#### Logical Consequences:

Are logically connected to the misbehavior

Are intended to teach responsible behavior

Are administered in a firm and calm manner

Are respectful

Allow the child to participate

#### Punishment:

is an arbitrary retaliation for misbehavior

is intended to teach blindly obedient behavior

is often delivered in an atmosphere of anger and resentment

is disrespectful

is dictated by the authority

(Michael H. Popkin, Ph.D., *Active Parenting Now, Parents' Guide*, Active Parenting Publishers, 2002, p. 84)

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Discipline is only one part of parenting. Churches can help parents in other aspects of their important calling as well. Whenever our churches have joyful celebrations of baptisms, a congregation promises to help the parents nurture their children in the faith. Churches need to be involved in family ministries because of the promises we make at each child's baptism, because of Jesus' call for us to love our neighbors, and because families enrich the lives of congregations.

A recent Presbyterian Panel survey of pastors found that resources for the spiritual formation of children were what they wanted most (August 2002). The Directory for Worship in the *Book of Order* has some helpful ideas (see W-5.4000 "Prayer in Personal Worship"; W-5.7000 "Worship in Families and Households"; W-6.2000 2. Christian Nurture; and W-7.000 "Worship and the Ministry of the Church in the World"). The revised church guide to *Active Parenting Now* has twelve handouts that are new and offer a mixture of biblical material, questions for individual and group reflection and a wealth of practical ideas to help children and parents grow in faith together. Web pages' addresses with helpful additional online resources are in this updated edition. The church guide seeks to combine an emphasis on "inward and outward journeys" of faith, spiritual formation with active discipleship with handouts that include table graces/mealtime blessings, "101 Ways to Live the Good News with Kids", Church World Service's intergenerational activities for a better world and much more.

The churches doing parenting programs will benefit church members and others in the community. Many of the parenting skills like sensitive listening can easily be used by participants in other contexts, such as between couples or at work. Young families may join our churches after the parents first come to attend a parenting seminar.

Our churches offering quality parenting programs will help "parents receive the grace to care for children in love and to nurture their individuality." (*The Confession of 1967*)

**Authors:**

Bruce and Carolyn Winfrey Gillette are the parents of John (age 15), Catherine (age 12) and Sarah (age 10). They are co-pastors of the First Presbyterian Church, Pitman, NJ since 1994. For sixteen years, the Gillettes have taught parenting programs annually, sometimes team teaching with elementary and high school counselors and a Catholic parochial school principal. They wrote the 2003 revision of Freda A. Gardner's *Active Parenting Now in the Community of Faith: A Biblical and Theological Guide*. The Gillettes have done an annotated bibliography that offers 40 resources (90% of these resources were published in the last five years) for church libraries, personal reading and group discussions along with a suggested list of thirty helpful web sites for parents, church educators and pastors at [www.ActiveParenting.com/FaithResources.htm](http://www.ActiveParenting.com/FaithResources.htm)

## HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS PUPPET SHOWS

*These puppet shows were developed by the Spokane County (Washington State) Domestic Violence Consortium Education Committee. These can be adapted to be sensitive to the different cultures where used.*

### SKIT 1 – THE NEW SHIRT

<b>Cast of Characters:</b>	<b>John</b>	<b>Sarah</b>
	<b>Kaleel</b>	<b>Madeline</b>
	<b>Zack</b>	<b>Teacher</b>

*John enters from stage right and Sarah enters from stage left, meeting just stage right of center stage.*

**John:** Oh, man, I thought recess would never come.

**Sarah:** I know. That math test was so hard.

*Kaleel enters from upstage and gets in between John and Sarah.*

**Kaleel:** *(To Sarah)* Sarah, do you like this new shirt my mom bought me?

**Sarah:** Well, it's not my style, but if you like it, you should wear it.

**John:** *(Upset that Kaleel interrupted his conversation with Sarah)* Hey, Kaleel, that's a stupid shirt you're wearing. Where did you get it? At the dump?

**Kaleel:** That's not very nice, John. My mom bought it for me. I like it.

**Sarah:** Yeah, John. It's not very nice to say things like that.

**John:** *(John starts pushing Kaleel,)* Stupid shirt, stupid shirt!

*Sarah moves more stage left as Madeline and Zack enter from upstage left, between Sarah and the two boys. Zack is closer to center stage, while Madeline is closer to stage left. They sit back closer to upstage than the rest of the characters.*

**Zack:** Hey, John, quit pushing Kaleel!

**Madeline:** Sarah, let's go get a teacher. *(Madeline and Sarah exit upstage left. Depending on the number of puppeteers, Sarah does not have to return.)*

**Zack:** Madeline's going to tell. Now, stop pushing Kaleel!

*John and Kaleel improv a fight scene to buy time for character changes.*

*A teacher runs over with Madeline from upstage left. The teacher is nearly center stage with John and Kaleel stage right and Madeline and Zack upstage and stage left.*

**Teacher:** Thank you, kids, run along and play. I will handle this. *(Pause - Turning to John)* John, what's going on here?

*John stops pushing Kaleel; he stands there, looking guilty.*

**Teacher:** John, why were you pushing Kaleel?

**John:** I wasn't.

**Teacher:** I saw you, John. Now, what is the problem?

**John:** Nothing.

**Teacher:** Kaleel, what's going on?

**Kaleel:** He's making fun of my shirt.

**Teacher:** Has anyone ever made fun of you for what you were wearing, John?

**John:** No. Why would they? I don't wear stupid shirts.

**Teacher:** Well, if they did, how do you think you'd feel?

**John:** I don't know.

**Teacher:** Would it feel good to be made fun of?

**John:** No.

**Teacher:** Would you feel happy or mad about it if it happened to you?

**John:** It would hurt my feelings. I would be mad.

**Teacher:** Has Kaleel done something to you that would make you want to hurt his feelings?

**John:** I don't know. . . no.

**Teacher:** Then why would you want to hurt Kaleel like this?

*John doesn't answer.*

**Teacher:** Have you ever heard the saying, treat others like you want to be treated?

**John:** Well, *(pause)* maybe.

**Teacher:** Well, think about it for a minute. Would you like others to pick on you?

**John:** No.

**Teacher:** Well then you need to be nice to others so they will be nice to you. OK, John?

**John:** OK

**Teacher:** Thank you. I'll see you back in class. *(Teacher exits upstage left.)* Hey! You kids over there! Slow down!

*(While Madeline and Zack enter from upstage left talking.)*

**Madeline:** Yeah! A kick ball game does sound great. Let's go!

**Zack:** Let's see if Kaleel wants to play too.

*(Turning to Kaleel.)*

**Zack:** Hey, Kaleel, we were about to start a game of kickball. Are you coming?

**Kaleel:** *(Turning to Zack at stage left.)* Yeah, be right there. *(Turning back to John.)* Hey, John, do you want to play with us?

**John:** Really?!

**Kaleel:** Yeah. But no more teasing me about my shirt!

**John:** Okay. Sorry about that. Will you forgive me?

**Kaleel:** Yes. Thank you for apologizing. It wasn't nice to make fun of my shirt, but I still want to be your friend. You don't have to like my shirt. What's important is that I do.

*(Both exit to upstage left.)*

### **Facilitator Follow-Up**

#### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. Did you see any violence in this story?
2. Was it John pushing Kaleel?
3. How do you think Kaleel felt? Let's ask him.

4. Was talking to the teacher a good idea? Why?
5. John, what have you learned today about teasing and bullying?
6. Do you have anything to tell John about what he did?
7. What are the rules about bullying at your school?
8. Kaleel, do you have anything more to tell the kids about what happened today?

## SKIT 2 – JOHN’S DAD GETS MAD

**Cast of Characters:**            **Sarah**                            **Zach**  
   **John**                                    **Teacher**

*Sarah sits by herself center stage. Head drooping, she sighs deeply. Zack enters stage right, holding a soccer ball in his hands, humming to himself and very excited.*

**Zach:** Hey Sarah. Guess what?

*Sarah shakes her head sadly and holds her head with her hands.*

**Zach.** I learned a cool new trick you can do with a soccer ball. Want to see?

*Sarah shrugs.*

**Zach:** What’s the matter Sarah? You seem really sad.

**Sarah:** I don’t know. My stomach hurts today. I just feel bad all over.

**Zach:** Are you sick? Maybe you should call your Mom and have her pick you up from school?

**Sarah:** I’m not sick. I just feel icky.

**Zach:** How come?

**Sarah:** I saw something yesterday that made me feel scared inside when I was playing at John’s house.

**Zach:** What did you see?

*Sarah, with eyes cast down, shakes her head again.*

**Zach:** Sara, it's okay to talk to me.

**Sarah:** When John's Dad came home from work he was really, really mad. He yelled at John and me because we were playing cards on the floor. John's Mom asked us to go outside and play. She said it nice, but something didn't feel right. She acted afraid. After John and I went outside, we could hear his Dad yelling at his Mom in a really mean way!

*Zach puts the ball down and puts an arm around Sarah.*

**Zach:** That sounds really scary. What happened after that?

**Sarah:** I don't know. I heard a loud noise like someone broke a dish. I was scared so I just ran home. I didn't know what to do.

**Zach:** Gosh! I'm sorry that happened. I don't like it when people say mean things to each other. Teacher said we should treat everyone the way we want to be treated.

**Sarah:** But Zach, this was John's Dad. Aren't grownups supposed to know better?

*Zach shrugs.*

**Zach:** I guess so, but sometimes grownups have problems too. I hope John's okay.

**Sarah:** Here he comes now!

**Zach:** Hey John! How's it going?

*John appears stage right.*

**John:** None of your business.

**Sarah:** John, I was scared yesterday. How come your Dad was yelling so much?

**John:** It's no big deal. He's always yelling about something! (*Defensive*)

**Zach:** I don't think it's okay when people aren't nice to each other, even if they are grownups.

**John:** I don't like it either. But what can I do about it?

**Sarah:** There must be something we can do!

**Zach:** Let's ask teacher. He always listens to us when something is wrong.

**Sarah:** Yeah! I always feel better when I talk to teacher or a grownup I know cares about me.

**John:** I don't think teacher likes me.

**Zach:** Yes he does. Just because you get in trouble sometimes doesn't mean teacher doesn't like you.

**John:** Okay, maybe I'll talk to him.

*Teacher appears stage left.*

**Teacher:** Hello students. I'm surprised you kids aren't playing kickball. I've never seen the three of you miss a chance to play kickball during recess.

**Sarah:** We were talking about something.

**Teacher:** Is there something I can help any of you with?

**John:** We're having a bad day because my Dad was mad and mean last night. He yelled at me and Sarah. He yelled at my Mom too! He even threw a bowl onto the floor and broke it.

**Sarah:** It was really scary. We don't know what to do.

**Teacher:** I'm glad you told me. It was a really good thing to do. It's really scary when adults fight. You know when parents have fighting problems it is never the children's fault.

*Teacher places one hand on Sarah's shoulder and one hand on John's shoulder.*

**Teacher:** Let's go inside so we can talk about this more. We'll also talk about how to keep safe when adults are fighting.

### **Facilitator Follow-up:**

#### **DISCUSSION IDEAS**

1. It sure is sad and scary when you see people fighting. I'm glad Sarah and John talked to their teacher. He probably has some good ideas about being safe.
2. It's a good idea to create a plan in your head in case something happens and you don't feel safe.
3. Let's bring back the kids and talk to them.

*(Puppets return)*

4. So John and Sarah, do you feel better after talking to the teacher?

*(Yes, he helped us make Safety Plans for when we don't feel safe.)*

5. Can you share your Safety Plans with the students here?

6. I'd just like to say that it's so nice to see the three of you being such good friends and helping each other out.
7. I think some of the students have some questions for you.

### SKIT 3 – THE PIZZA AND THE DOG

**Cast of Characters:**            **John**                            **Sarah**  
   **Madeline**                            **Zack**  
   **Dog**

*Three kids are standing around (stage left) talking about what they can do for fun. At stage right you see a fence, but no dog.*

**Madeline:** What should we do now that school is out?

**Zack:** What if we go to the park?

**Madeline:** Oh, Zack, That's a stupid idea! You always have stupid ideas.

**John:** Yeah. Hey, Madeline, I know what we can do! There's Zack's neighbor's house and their dumb dog. He always runs to the fence when we come by. I saved some pizza from my lunch. If you hold it out, he thinks he's going to get some, then you pull it back real quick and he can't get any. Dumb dog!

*As the children are talking, the dog pops up stage right of the fence. He is sniffing about and being dog like.*

**Zack:** I don't want to do that, John. That's mean. Besides, we could get in trouble. I think we should go to the park or do something else.

**Madeline:** You never want to do anything exciting, Zack. If you don't come with us, I'll never let you play with my gameboy again!

**John:** Come on! Let's go.

*Madeline and John move over to the fence at stage right. Zack follows but hangs back.*

**Dog:** Oh, some kids are coming and they have some pizza!

**John:** Madeline, watch this! *(He holds out the pizza. Just as the dog reaches for it, John jerks it back. He and Madeline start laughing.)*

**Dog:** *(Confused, the dog runs the fence barking.)* Ruff, ruff!

**Madeline:** Let me try, John! *(Trading the pizza, she does the same thing.)*

**Zack:** No, Madeline, no.

*John and Madeline begin passing the pizza back and forth, teasing the dog.*

**Dog:** These kids are so mean to me! Why are they teasing me with the pizza?

*Sarah walks up from stage left.*

**Sarah:** Madeline, John, what are you doing?

**John:** It's none of your business, Sarah!

**Sarah:** No, stop doing that! That's mean!

**Madeline:** Aw, Sarah, it's just a stupid dog.

**Sarah:** It is not just a stupid dog. You are hurting it's feelings. Come on Zack, we have to stop them!

**Facilitator:** Stop there you guys. Now let's talk about what you could do.

### **Facilitator Follow-Up**

#### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. Kids, I need some help! What needs to be done now?
2. How do you think the dog feels? Are his feelings hurt? Do you think animals have feelings?
3. How should we treat animals? What should we do around animals we don't know?

## RESOURCES FOR AND ABOUT CHILDREN

### **A Place for Starr: A Story of Hope for Children Experiencing Family Violence**

Howard Schor

Kidsrights; (2002)

ISBN: 1558640827

Reading level: Ages 9-12

Book Description: A Place for Starr follows an African-American girl and her family as they break the cycle of violence. It is a good therapeutic tool, told in rhyme, for children who have experienced family violence.

### **Talking about Domestic Violence**

Nicola Edwards

Chrysalis Education; (October 2003)

ISBN: 1932333088

Reading level: Ages 4-8

Book Description: This book is part of a series on a range of difficult personal and social issues that children may have to face. This and others in the series provide information, coping strategies, and support for any child who may be worried or afraid.

### **A Safe Place to Live: A Story for Children Who Have Experienced Domestic Violence**

Michelle A. Harrison, Luanne Marten (Illustrator)

KIDSRIGHT, a division of JIST Publishing, Inc.; (January 2002)

ISBN: 1558640908

Reading level: Ages 9-12

Book Description (Amazon.com): Excellent illustrations and text tell a story of domestic violence between parents in a way to help the child (up to age 12 or so) feel safe and loved. Multicultural images, with police presented as friends. A Spanish Language edition is also available from the publisher.

### **Something Is Wrong at My House**

Diane Davis

Parenting Press; (December 1, 1984)

ISBN: 0943990106

Reading level: Ages 4-8

Review (*The Reviewing Librarian*, Fall 1986)

It is an extremely well-conceived little paperback which deals with a serious issue – the problem of violence in the home, in a format which children can easily comprehend and that offers them some solutions.

### **A Terrible Thing Happened - A story for children who have witnessed violence or trauma**

Margaret M. Holmes, Sasha J. Mudlaff, Cary Pillo

Magination Press; (January 1, 2000)

ISBN: 1557987017

Reading level: Ages 4-8

Book Description (Amazon.com): Sherman Smith saw the most terrible thing happen. At first he tried to forget about it, but soon something inside him started to bother him. He felt nervous for no reason. Sometimes his stomach hurt. He had bad dreams. And he started to feel angry and do

mean things, which got him in trouble. Then he met Ms. Maple, who helped him talk about the terrible thing that he had tried to forget. Now Sherman is feeling much better. This gently told and tenderly illustrated story is for children who have witnessed any kind of violent or traumatic episode, including physical abuse, school or gang violence, accidents, homicide, suicide, and natural disasters such as floods or fire.

### **Web Sites**

For children and teens: [www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org)

For teens: [www.teenrelationships.org](http://www.teenrelationships.org)

For adults: <http://www.futureofchildren.org>

## CHILDREN'S SAFETY PLAN

Children can participate and learn some strategies to stay safe during violent episodes in their homes. The goal is for them to seek safety and to know where and how to get help. It is not their role to stop the violence. Before engaging in a conversation with your child, remember to consider what are the best age-appropriate actions they can take. Children are more likely to follow through with a plan when they have been part of creating it themselves.

### Talking with your child about a plan...

What are some clues or warning signs that might mean that a violent situation may be coming?

[arguing, drinking, things being thrown, threats...]

What room is the safest to go to? Is there a lock on the door?

Is there a telephone (out of the sight of the abuser) to call 911? What should I say? Remember to leave the phone off the hook after calling.

If I need to get out of the house, where should I go? What doors or windows can I go out? Who can I trust?

Where do I meet the family when the danger is over?

### Remember...

- ✓ Practice the route to safety
- ✓ Rehearse what your children need to say to police or to a trusted neighbor or relative
- ✓ Teach your child their full name, address and phone number
- ✓ The plan may not work; there are no guarantees
- ✓ Children need to know that the violence is not their fault
- ✓ They should never try to stop the violence
- ✓ Having a code word to activate the plan may help your child move into action quickly