

Communication is vital- Doing all of the above will take time and patience. What your child also needs to hear about abuse from you as the victim is:

It's not okay

It's not your fault

It must be scary for you

I will listen to you

You can tell me how you feel, it's important

I'm sorry you had to see/hear that

You do not deserve to have this in your family

I will keep you safe

There is nothing you could have done to stop this or change it We can talk about what to do if it happens again (safety planning)

If you feel that you are not coping with your child or that their behaviour is worsening or dangerous it is important to get help and support as soon as possible. You can speak with your IDVA, a teacher, your health visitor, your midwife or your GP.

All of the above agencies have a duty of care to you and your child. If your child is considered at significant risk of harm then these agencies may have to share information with each other. Where possible, we, and they, will attempt to get your permission to share information. In some cases though, we may need to share information without your permission if it would put your

Other factsheets in this series

Leaflet 1 Pregnancy and domestic abuse

Leaflet 1a You, your child and domestic abuse

Leaflet 2 Parenting Babies under 18 months

Leaflet 3 Parenting Toddlers (18 -24 months)

Leaflet 4 Parenting Preschool Children

Leaflet 5 Parenting 5 - 12 year olds

Leaflet 6 Parenting Teenagers

Leaflet 7 Separation, Moving home & Contact

Leaflet 8 What Children Learn

Leaflet 10 Successful Parenting

You can access these factsheets and find out more information about domestic abuse at the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Partnership website www.cambsdasv.org.uk

Cambridge Women's Aid **01223 361214**
(City/South Cambs)

Refuge **07787 255821**
(Fenland, East Cambs, Hunts)

Children's Social Care (Cambridgeshire)
0345 045 5203
Specialist abuse services for children
& young people (Peterborough) **01733 669404**



**Cambridgeshire
& Peterborough**
Domestic Abuse & Sexual
Violence Partnership

Communicating with your children about domestic abuse



Leaflet 9

COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR CHILDREN ABOUT DOMESTIC ABUSE; WHAT CHILDREN NEED TO HEAR FROM THE VICTIM

This leaflet is one of a series of ten. They are designed to give you information on how domestic abuse may impact on your children and how you can help your child to overcome the effects of domestic abuse.

Leaflet 9 is a tool to help you communicate with your child (which should be done in an age appropriate way) about your experiences of domestic abuse. It will help you to understand the messages that your children need to hear about the abuse and help them to learn and respond to talking about abuse. It is important when using the tips in this leaflet that you listen to your children's responses, accept their feelings, and help work out what their emotional needs are and what they need to know about domestic abuse. This leaflet takes a brief look at the areas mentioned. If you would like further tools on communicating with your children then please ask your support worker to arrange this for you.

Your children may be uncomfortable talking with you about the abuse and may try to create obstacles to the discussion. You may find that you have obstacles so it is important to recognise that and try talking to a close friend or relative first. It will be easier the second time around. Listen carefully to how your children respond to your requests to talk. If they become angry, leave them and tell them that you would like them to come to you when they feel they can talk to you. Give them time but persevere.

LISTENING TO YOUR CHILD:

Don't interrupt

Give them your full attention if possible

Answer in a way that lets them know that you are listening

Don't express an opinion or tell them that they are wrong

Let them know you understand their point of view

Don't give them advice or correct them

Listening takes practice. Try to hear what your child says even if you don't agree. There is a time for talking about both your points of view, but this is after you have gotten used to listening.

Accepting our child's feelings can also be difficult but we need to let them talk about their feelings without saying anything, judging them, or telling them that their feelings are wrong. Some tips for listening for and accepting feelings are:

Listen for the feeling you hear

Let them know that you hear them "It seems like you feel _____"

Don't say anything else, let your child respond

Don't tell your child how to feel better or why they feel the way they do

After your child has had time to respond, you can let them know you understand by saying things like:

That sounds frustrating/hard etc

Sometimes I feel that way too

I understand

I am here for you if you want to talk about it now or later

Your child may have different emotional needs that need to be met by you when there has been abuse and/or violence. Some of these are detailed below.

- **Fear** - Your child needs to feel free of fear of those that they love. They need to have someone they trust that they can talk to. They need to learn ways to be safe and to gain some control over their situation in the home, i.e. safety planning
- **Anger** - Your child may feel angry at you or the abusive parent. They need to know that it is normal to feel like this and to be able to talk about their feelings. They also need to know how to show their anger in non destructive ways.
- **Dealing with mixture of anger and love**- Your child needs to know that this is also normal where there has been abuse. They need to know that it's ok to love their parents even when there has been abuse. They also need to know that they are not bad if they love the abusive parent
- **Confusion**- Your child may experience this around being able to love both of you. Your child needs to know that it is ok to love both parents at the same time
- **Loss**- Your child may feel the loss of their parent, their normal life and loss of things in their home. Your child needs to have someone that they trust to talk to and a support system outside of the home.
- **Guilt and responsibility**- It is common for children to feel this way in abusive homes. Your child needs to understand that the violence was not their fault
- **Life is unpredictable**- Your child needs to have control over their life and to make plans and decisions with you. A safety plan will also help