

Speak with school or family about a safe person for your child to talk to

Give them praise and encouragement

If you feel that you are still struggling to cope with your children and cannot meet their needs because of the abuse and/or violence at home, then it is important for you to ask for help sooner rather than later. There are agencies that will help you without judging you. You can speak with your IDVA, your child's school teacher, the school nurse, your GP or your local safeguarding team. 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 child at further risk if we did ask permission.

There are a number of other leaflets in this series which focus on what a child learns from domestic abuse, how to communicate with your child around domestic abuse, and how to re-establish leadership with your child through respectful parenting.

Other factsheets in this series

- Leaflet 1** Pregnancy and domestic abuse
- Leaflet 1a** You, your child and domestic abuse
- Leaflet 2** Parenting a baby 0-18 months
- Leaflet 3** Parenting a Toddler 18-24 months
- Leaflet 4** Parenting a Pre schooler
- Leaflet 6** Parenting Teenagers
- Leaflet 7** Issues around moving home, separation and contact
- Leaflet 8** How to talk to your children about domestic abuse/violence
- Leaflet 9** Communication with your child about domestic abuse. What children need to hear from the victim.
- Leaflet 10** Respectful parenting and establishing leadership with children who have witnessed domestic abuse.

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

Parenting a child 5-12 years who has experienced abuse



Leaflet 5

PARENTING A CHILD 5 - 12 YEARS WHO HAS EXPERIENCED DOMESTIC ABUSE

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 5 contains information on how to parent a child who has witnessed domestic abuse and/or violence. It gives information on how the abuse can impact on your child and some tips on how to help your child recover from their experiences.

Many parents worry that the impact of the abuse and/or violence will remain with their child throughout their lives and that their children will be negatively influenced by the abuse/violence. This is not the case. In many situations, supporting your child with the abuse and communicating with them about the abuse will help to get rid of any of the negative effects the experience of domestic abuse and/or violence has caused. There is a lot that you can do to help. Please note that the term 'experiencing domestic abuse' means seeing, hearing, knowing about or being abused.

Between the ages of 5 and 12 years, your child will go through many developmental leaps. Their thinking processes are becoming more adult like. They are testing boundaries, with their peers in particular, and learning how to react and respond to people and their behaviour in their environment. They are beginning to try to manipulate the world around them and are beginning to understand that gender is fixed, i.e. a little boy will no longer say "when I grow up I am going to be a mummy". Right through this range of years, young children are

learning how adults can make mistakes and are learning to see other people's point of view. In the period up to twelve years, your child is learning to master the more formal skills in life such as relating to peers according to the rules, team work, broadening their skills through play activities and fantasy, cooperation with others and leading as well as following. At around 11-12 years, puberty may have started and with all this entails your child is already in need of support, communication and understanding.

Parenting can be a difficult time, but with the additional problems of domestic abuse parenting can become a task that you may feel you do not have the time or energy for. Your child may have a lot of energy, may make demands on you to play or take them out. They may be difficult because of the abuse. Their abusive parent may undermine you in front of your child, or they could use your child in their abusive tactics. You may find that you get angry and take it out on your child instead of the abusive parent. You may be made to feel that you are a bad parent. All of this can have an effect on your child.

It is very important that you acknowledge this as soon as possible. This will be difficult for you as you may be feeling guilty about your child's experiences of domestic abuse or you may feel that they have not been affected. Research has shown that in 75% of cases children have been aware of the abuse and/or violence even if they have not been in the home.

HOW DO I BEGIN TO OVERCOME THE EFFECTS OF THE ABUSE/VIOLENCE WITH MY CHILD?

Speak with your child. Listen to them. You may not like what they have to say but they need to be able to tell you how they are feeling. Be non-threatening. Your child needs you. Your child may show the following if they have witnessed domestic abuse:

They may continue to be overly dependent on adults

They may be anxious around new people/situations

They may be unusually withdrawn

They may find it difficult to make friends

They may hurt themselves or others

They may treat you like their abusive parent treated you

They may begin to bed wet

They may have nightmares

They may go off their food

They may experience shame and guilt leading to defeat and inferiority

They may show little imagination or act out the abuse/violence

They may have little self discipline

HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD?

Talk to your child and listen to what they say

Play with them, children often explore feelings in play

Draw, a lot can be learned from a picture

Tell them the abuse was not their fault

Give them time

Make sure that they know that adults are responsible for their own behaviour