

This is mostly enforced by implied threats and not actually saying the threat

Do not be passive. You are telling your child that you will not rock the boat and that they can control you.

Assertive communication is the best form of respectful parenting. This is the best way to build on your parenting relationship with your child. When you and your child have a clear understanding of your roles and expectations you are both beginning to work through how relationships are supposed to be conducted. It is important, particularly where there has been abuse, that children learn what is okay in relationships and what is not ok. It will be a difficult time for you both and you may still have the impact of the abusive parent if you are still in the relationship. You will need to keep reverting to the leaflet about what the children need to hear from you as a victim and you will always need to communicate with them. Communication is key to ensuring that your children do not think that abuse and violence are normal and acceptable.

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 Issues around moving home, separation and contact

Leaflet 8 How to talk to your children about domestic abuse/violence

Leaflet 9 Communicating with your child about domestic abuse. What children need to hear from the victim

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

Respectful parenting with children who have witnessed domestic abuse



Leaflet 10

RESPECTFUL PARENTING AND ESTABLISHING LEADERSHIP WITH CHILDREN WHO HAVE WITNESSED 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 10 outlines ways to help you overcome the effects that domestic abuse may have on you and your children in your parenting role. Sometimes your relationship with your children can be undermined and difficult when there has been abuse. It is very easy to fall in to a permissive parenting style because you feel that your children have been through enough with the abuse and/or violence. Permissive parenting can be caused by self-blame. Getting rid of self-blame is difficult. This leaflet will help you to think about your self-blame and overcome it and how to use respectful parenting to re-establish leadership with your children.

It is very easy to blame yourself for the domestic abuse and/or violence in your home i.e. "I should have left sooner", "if I just did what he wanted...." If we can get rid of these self-blaming thoughts we can become better parents to our children. It is important that you acknowledge your self-blaming thoughts and to try to use more positive or realistic thoughts.

LISTENING TO YOUR CHILD:

I did the best that I could at the time

The violence and abuse was not my fault

My husband/partner is responsible for his own behaviour and there was nothing I could have done to prevent it

My children have been hurt or affected by the abuse, but I did everything that I could at the time to protect them.

Once we begin to acknowledge that we are not to blame for the abuse and/or violence in our home, we can begin to work on our parenting style. The abuse may have meant that our role as a mother has been affected. Along with the self-blame we may have lost respect and leadership with our children, feelings that we have towards our abuser may come out, we may be highly stressed and anxious and we may be afraid of leaving the abuser because of the impact on the children. If we can work out what type of parent we have become as a result of the abuse we can take steps to overcome this and become strong supportive leaders with our children.

There are three main types of parenting:

Permissive parenting- this is where we allow our children to 'get away with things' because we feel guilty about the experiences they have had as a result of the abuse and/or violence. You as a parent are not respected

Punitive parenting- This is where power is used over the child and where there is no flexibility or negotiation. Your child is not respected

Mutual respect parenting- this is where both are respected and both parties ideas, feelings and communications are seen as important (respectful parenting)

In order to respectfully parent we need to be considering the following:

Be fair

Be a good listener

Pay attention to your child

Be consistent

Agree mutual rules

Solve problems with your child

Never put them down or humiliate them (and vice versa)

Never label your child (and vice versa)

Have confidence in yourself and your child

Tell them when they are doing well

Introduce consequences that will relate to the problem- i.e. do not send a child to their room for three hours if they have not put their toys away, instead, negotiate that they will not be able to play with their toys if they don't tidy up

Encourage your children

Have clear rules and expectations

This can all take time to learn and may be alien to you and your child for a while. You may have difficult periods when you are both adjusting to this new system, but with patience and consistency you should see results. How you communicate your parenting requests is also important. Here are some tips:

Be assertive, express your thoughts, opinions and feelings clearly, honestly and respectfully

Do not be aggressive with your child. This violates their rights and reinforces that aggression gets you what you want. Your child will mirror this behaviour and parenting can become a bigger issue

Do not use subtle forms of aggression. You may not be aware that you are doing this but this can subtly tell the other person that you are dominating them.