



PARENTING AFTER DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

*Towards Health and Healing
For You and Your Children*

SHOULD I TALK TO MY CHILD ABOUT THE ABUSE?

yes!

Many parents are uncertain about bringing up the impact of domestic violence on their child. Parents may hope once their child is in a safe place they will forget about it. They may think discussing it does harm or "the less they know the better." A parent may be scared it will anger the abuser.

Parents may even think since they were not physically harmed, they were not impacted.

Unfortunately, even children who were not physically abused still suffer the impacts. They may have experienced:

- Hearing threats or insults
- Seeing caretakers angry and afraid
- Getting blamed for the violence
- Losing their home or friends
- Missing out on activities because one parent controlled transportation or money

"Sometimes you're afraid to talk to them about what's going on."

WHAT ARE SIGNS

my child has been impacted by domestic violence?

Some children exhibit stress in predictable ways; but other children exhibit stress in more "invisible" ways.

Here are a few signs that your child may be dealing with stress:

- Crying
- Headaches
- Stomach Aches
- Bed Wetting
- Tantrums
- Fear/On Edge
- Clingy
- Nightmares
- Insomnia
- Self Harm
- Substance Use
- Performs poorly in school
- Acts "perfect" at home and school
- Anger toward abuser, parent, or self
- Mimics aggression—from the playground to their own dating relationships
- Few friends or isolates



There are many reasons why this conversation is difficult, but talking to your child about their experience is critical for building a healthy future for them. Studies show that people who have six or more adverse childhood experiences (ACES) are likely to lead lives that are, on average, 20 years shorter. Removing your child from violence *and* talking with them after is life saving!

Parenting is so hard. It's important children know that violence is unacceptable and you are there for them. Here are some key ideas to get across to your child.

- I love you so much.
- It's not your fault.
- Violence is never the way to solve problems.
- You can talk to me anytime.
- It's good to talk about feelings.
- You may feel lots of different ways and that's okay.
- I'm here for you.
- I am making sure we are safe.
- Healing doesn't happen once. It's a process.



"Talk to your child and trust that they hear you, even if they act like they are ignoring you."



"I want to show my kids what real love looks like. They think abuse is 'normal.' I used to too."

"Make sure you take care of yourself so you can take care of your children."

"Enroll in trauma therapy as soon as you can. It helped my kids cope with their PTSD and helped identify ADHD and Autism."



HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD?

Tips from Advocates and Survivors to Nurture Resilience

"I grew up in an abusive household. My sisters have abusive partners and my brother overdosed. I used to wonder what made me different, but really the secret is who. I had a bonus family—several, really. My neighbors gave me a childhood that I wouldn't have had otherwise. They gave me a church family. Later, they also gave me a work family. The family that chose me (and that I chose) made me who I am, and pulled me back from the edge time and time again. That is why community is so important to me."



- **Enroll your child in therapy. Consider enrolling yourself.** Therapy for children is covered by KCHIP. Many schools have behavioral health professionals.
- **Use schedules and routine to build stability** with bedtime reading and regular meal times. Consistency and predictability are calming.
- **Make small, realistic promises.** And follow through. This helps your child build trust.
- **Pay attention and give affection.** Give them lots of eye contact, snuggles, kisses, and hugs. Put your phone down.
- **Create special time.** Even if it's five minutes, let them choose the activity. Don't multitask. Show how important they are to you.
- **Set boundaries for expected behavior.** *Stick to the boundary calmly and stay with your child as they show emotion.* A limit about TV may evoke "over the top" rage and grief. You are establishing yourself as a safe place and giving them a chance to let out emotions.
- **Answer questions** honestly to remove fear of the unknown.
- **Build self esteem.** Acknowledge what they are good at and when they are kind or helpful.
- **Foster positive relationships.** Research shows that a positive relationship with just one other adult is the number one protective factor for at-risk youth.
- **Build social connections** through church, scouting, neighbors, sports, play dates, or whatever your family's interests are.

"If you're in a situation where you're forced to co-parent with your abuser, don't let your hurt and anger control you. Focus on what's best for the kids, and remember: **DON'T SAY IT, TEXT IT, OR TYPE IT**, unless you'd want the judge to hear it!"



BUILD A SUPPORT SYSTEM

Create a safe stable place by seeking a protective order.

Enter a domestic violence shelter.

Connect with Community Based Agencies for support with food, housing, or employment.

Seek child support through your local child support office (if safe).

Build connections with trusted adults and mentors.

Attend therapy.

Reach out for help.

Make a safety plan and revisit it as your situation changes.

Share any concerns about visitation with a trusted friend (to vent away from children) or your attorney for resources on supervised visits or safety planning.

TAKING CARE OF YOU

Living through domestic violence and keeping your children safe can take a toll. It's important to take care of yourself, so you can take care of your children.

- **Model healthy ways to cope with stress.**
 - Recognize when you're stressed and take a break.
 - Eat healthy
 - Take a walk or a dance party break in your living room.
 - Connect with friends.
 - Get into nature or just take a few minutes outside.
- **Model a positive outlook.**
 - Reframe negative thoughts. ("I can't do this yet. You can do hard things.")
 - Fact check your bad thought. Is this true? Also, is this helpful?
 - How would a friend say this to you? Be kind.
- **Model resilience.** When faced with a problem, show your child that the problem is only for a short time and that things will get better. Your ability to stay positive, bounce back and work through tough situations demonstrates resilience, grit, and *stick-with-it-ness* (all qualities worth praising in yourself and child).

GROW
RESILIENCE



CONNECT WITH OUR CONNECTIONS

Bethany House Abuse Shelter

1-800-755-2017 or
(606) 679-1553

GreenHouse 17

1-800-544-2022 or
(859) 233-0657

BRASS (Barren River Area Safe Space)

1-800-928-1183 or
(270) 843-1183

ASARC (Adanta Sexual Assault Resource Center)

1-800-633-5599 or
(606) 679-4782

Lake Cumberland Children's Advocacy Center

(270) 343-6922

Kentucky Child Abuse Hotline

1-877-597-2331

Department for Community Based Services

Find your local office at kynect.ky.gov

"AppalReD meant the world
to me and my kids."



AppalReD Legal Aid can connect you with additional resources like Counseling, Housing, Support Groups, Community Connections, Financial Assistance, Food Assistance, and Other Help.

Contact your attorney or for free civil legal aid call 1-866-277-5733. You can apply for help online at ardfky.org/gethelp.



"Stay single and focus on yourself for a year. Many survivors leave one abusive relationship only to find themselves in one with someone new. So be aware of that. Know you have the power to walk away when they wave that first red flag."

CONNECT WITH OUR CONNECTIONS

Turning Point Domestic Violence Shelter

1-800-649-6605 or
606-886-6025

Safe Harbor of Northeast KY

Serving Lawrence County
1-800-926-2150

LKLP Safe House

Serving Knott County
1-800-928-3131

Mountain Comprehensive Care Center

Prestonsburg Office
606-886-8572

Judi's Place for Kids

606-886-8520

Creekside Children's Crisis Stabilization

606-886-6477

Kentucky Child Abuse Hotline

1-877-597-2331

Department for Community Based Services

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The Hope Initiative

<i>Prestonsburg</i>	<i>Inez</i>
606-886-4350	606-298-7902
<i>Martin City</i>	<i>Salyersville</i>
606-285-3142	606-349-3115
<i>Paintsville</i>	<i>Belfry</i>
606-789-3518	606-353-1287
<i>Pikeville</i>	
606-432-3143	

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