

How does domestic and family violence affect children?



FAMILY VIOLENCE LAW HELP

www.familyviolencelaw.gov.au

Domestic and family violence can seriously harm a child's emotional, psychological and physical wellbeing.

Not all children exposed to domestic and family violence are affected in the same way.

Research shows that children of all ages have more problems when they have been exposed to domestic and family violence. This includes babies and toddlers.

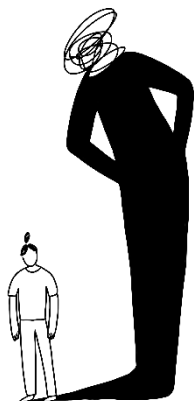


The effects may include:

- violent behaviour, aggression or temper tantrums
- anti-social behaviour and mood problems
- anxiety, depression and stress
- having difficulties self-soothing
- not being able to sleep which can include nightmares or bedwetting
- difficulty concentrating
- difficulties at school including poor reading and language skills
- not wanting to be separated from a parent and being scared about their, or their parent's safety
- physical health problems
- poor self-image and low self-esteem
- poor relationships with their parents, including becoming violent towards them
- difficulties making and keeping friends.



Any of these issues may continue into adolescence and adulthood.



Research also shows that children exposed to violence are more likely to grow up and have issues with:

- alcohol or drugs
- unemployment
- homelessness
- increased chance of using or experiencing violence in their adult relationships.

How does domestic and family violence affect parenting?

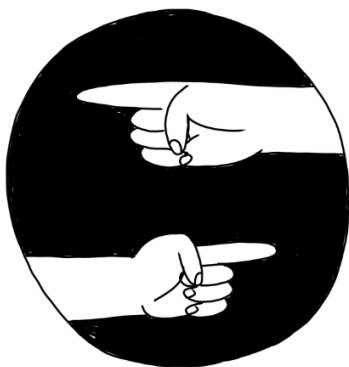
Domestic and family violence can affect a person's ability to parent.

Research suggests that parents who **use** domestic and family violence are more likely to:

- use coercive and manipulative tactics in parenting
- use harsh discipline
- use a child to undermine the mother's parenting and self-worth
- interfere with a child's relationship with their mother
- be angrier towards the children
- be less involved in parenting.

Research also shows parents who **experience** domestic and family violence are more likely to:

- change how they parent to avoid more anger and abuse from the other parent
- be less able to meet a child's needs due to the stress of the abuse
- experience depression and other mental health problems that can affect parenting
- use harsh discipline due to stress. This often stops when the family is safe.



Protecting children from domestic and family violence



Domestic and family violence can seriously harm a child's emotional, psychological and physical wellbeing.

It is important to protect children from domestic and family violence and to create an environment where children feel safe.

They need stable and loving relationships where they can find comfort when they are stressed or scared.

You can help your children by:

- Getting help to stop or safely leave violence
- giving them structure and routine in parenting
- caring for them and comforting them
- letting them know that it is okay to have feelings
- talking to them about their feelings, worries, hopes and dreams
- giving them positive reinforcement, telling them you love them and that you are proud of them
- respecting them and helping them to show respect for others
- being interested in them and supporting their achievements in school and sport
- supporting them to make healthy relationships with other family members, friends, and teachers.

To learn more, see www.familyviolencelaw.gov.au

While we have tried to make the information here as up-to-date and accurate as possible, the law is complex and always changing. All legal problems are different. You should see a lawyer to get advice about your problem. Legal Aid NSW, National Legal Aid and the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department are not liable for any errors or omissions, or for any loss or damage that arises from any person who relies on any information on this factsheet. This factsheet was developed in 2019.