

CHILDREN ARE IN *PAIN...*



...WHEN *DOMESTIC VIOLENCE*  
IS IN THEIR LIVES.

# HOW TO HELP CHILDREN DEAL WITH DOMESTIC ABUSE

- Let them know that the abuse is not their fault and that they cannot control it or stop it.
- Be a good example for your children. Teach them that violence is not the way to solve problems.
- Encourage the family to get counseling.
- If you are a victim of domestic abuse, take steps to leave the relationship as soon as you can.
- Teach children a basic safety plan for when the violence happens:
  - Go to a safe place and take their brothers and sisters with them.
  - Call 911!



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*A woman said to her abuser, “We have a son. When he beats his wife and children to the point of death, will you then be proud of him? After all, isn’t he just like you?”*

# WHAT IS DOMESTIC ABUSE?

Domestic abuse is a pattern of controlling, abusive or violent behavior in a relationship. Although some men can be victims of domestic abuse, the vast majority of victims are women. Domestic abuse includes physical, sexual and emotional attacks. Often, the children are victims of these attacks. Drug or alcohol abuse does not cause domestic abuse, but can make the problem much worse. The victim is not the cause of domestic abuse. In some families, domestic abuse continues for generations.

Some acts of domestic abuse are criminal: hitting, choking, assault with a weapon, shoving, scratching, biting, rape, unwanted sexual touching, forced sex with third parties, threats of violence, threats of harming other family members, harassment at work, or destruction of property.

Other acts of abuse may not be criminal, but are still hurtful: put-downs and nasty comments; threats of taking the children away; suicide threats or attempts; taking total control of the family's time, money, food, clothing, shelter, and entertainment.

Whether the abuse is criminal or not, domestic abuse ALWAYS harms children. Abusive partners often abuse their children. Almost all of the children who grow up in violent homes have seen or heard the violence. Even when they haven't seen the abuse, they know it is happening.



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*“He hit me in the stomach when I was pregnant, then he threatened to beat my daughter—and you don’t ever hit my kids... I tried and tried before, but when it comes to my kids—no more.”*

# C HILDREN ARE ALSO VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

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- Children may be hurt physically, emotionally, and sexually by the abuser.
- Children who see or hear abuse may become nervous, troubled, fearful, depressed, or try to hurt themselves.
- They will worry about their abused parent.
- They may wet their beds, have nightmares, stop talking, feel sick, not eat, and keep to themselves.



- They often cannot pay attention in school (because they are worried about what's happening at home).
- They blame themselves for the abuse.
- They feel they have to be perfect.
- These children are usually afraid to trust adults.
- As teenagers, they may run away, begin sex at an early age and have many partners, drop out of school, or try to kill themselves.
- They learn to hurt others to get their own way and can grow up to be abusers themselves.

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*“I knew I had to leave when my three-year-old son turned to me in anger and said, ‘Shut up you stupid bitch or I’ll kill you.’”*



## **C**CHILDREN LEARN WHAT THEY LIVE

Children learn about life and how to get along with other people from the adults in their lives. Children who live in violent families learn that it's normal to:

- Hurt others to get what they want.
- Injure or abuse a loved one when they are angry.
- Blame other people for their actions.
- Hide their feelings.
- Solve problems through violence.
- Live with abuse and neglect.

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*“It finally started to dawn on me that I was not the only person involved in it when I left in the ambulance. They were so scared. And I thought, ‘They don’t really have a dad—and now they’re not going to have a mom? I’m going to die on my kids?’”*

# **IF YOU ARE BEING ABUSED, THERE IS HELP**

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These are some ways to protect yourself and your children from an abusive partner. You can:

- Contact your local domestic violence shelter. (They can offer support, services and information even if you are not ready to leave home.)
- Develop a safety plan. (Any domestic violence shelter will help you with this.)
- Tell your physician or health care provider that you are being hurt at home.
- Call the police.
- Get an Order of Protection from the courts.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL:**

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**THE CRISIS HOTLINE**

**1-800-786-7380**

**OR**

**ARIZONA COALITION AGAINST  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

**1-800-782-6400**

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**If you know someone in this situation, listen to them, give them this brochure and encourage them to get help.**

***HELP IS AVAILABLE!***

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Domestic Relations Division (602) 542-9607  
In cooperation with the Committee on the  
Impact of Domestic Violence  
and the Courts "CIDVC"