

TALK WITH YOUR CHILDREN

It is okay and important to talk about violence in your home.

Your children know about the violence; give them permission to talk about it with you or another adult who can help them feel better. Unlock the "family secret".

94% of children studied in abusive homes were aware of the abuse between their parents, and 90% of children witnessed at least one incident of abuse.

Understand that you and your children are not alone. Help your children realize that other children are also in this same situation.

Since violence is a learned behaviour, children need to learn alternative and appropriate ways to deal with their angry feelings.

For example, you can encourage your children to talk about their feelings and learn positive ways to express their feelings. You can say, "I know you are angry but you cannot hit me. You can walk around the block and cool down then we can talk about what is upsetting you.

Your child may feel responsible for or guilty about the fighting in your home.

You can help by assuring your child that he/she is not to blame for the fights and arguments that occur between you and your partner. No one can make another person hit them.

Help your child understand that mixed feelings are normal

Let your child know it is ok to feel happy and sad or scared or angry at the same time. Your child may feel confused, "I am not sure what is right anymore. No matter what I do or how I act, the fighting still goes on. I wish the fighting would stop".

Permit your child to have feelings, even the ones that make you feel uncomfortable.

Tell them it is ok to miss Dad.

Other ways to help your children include

Developing a safety plan in case another violent episode occurs. Tell your children you want them to stay out of your fights because you do not want them to get hurt. Encourage them to go for help or call 911. Help build their self-esteem by telling them they are likeable and important people. Compliment them on any of their accomplishments no matter how small. i.e. art project from school, an award, good attitude, good manners, putting their things away. Encourage your child to talk to someone they trust about what happened, they may need your permission to seek support for themselves.

If there is unemployment and/or alcohol/drug dependency problems in your home, talk about it and seek appropriate help.

Help your child understand that your family may be experiencing a variety of problems which all need to be addressed. i.e. Drinking is not what makes your Daddy hit, even if he stops drinking he may still hit. If drinking or drugs is a problem, there are many support groups for children and spouses of dependent parents.

Remember no one deserves to be hit and no one has the right to hit someone else – EVER – and no one can control anyone but him/herself

From Rochester Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children Inc, Rochester NY