

Children are victims of domestic abuse too



Children and young people are affected by their experiences in the home and as such growing up in homes where there is domestic abuse will have a negative effect on them. Here is some information for our children and young people.

What is the difference between arguing and domestic abuse?

There are lots of ways that someone can be abusive, but the thing they have in common is that they make someone else feel bad. In all families there will be times when people feel cross and argue with each other. It is ok to disagree with each other and to have different ideas and opinions but in a fair argument each person should feel that they have had a chance to say what they think and be listened to. You should not be made to feel frightened or stupid by someone else. When there are positive relationships you can work things out after you have both calmed down, by discussing things together and making friends.

Domestic Abuse is when someone in your family or someone who is close to your family wants to control everyone else, and says and does things that hurt or scare the people close to them. The abuse can happen for any reason at any time - not just in your home.

These are some of the things that might happen:

Emotional abuse

- Calling you names that hurt your feelings or make you feel ugly or stupid
- Isolating you by making visitors feel unwelcome
- Stopping you from joining in activities with your friends
- Ignoring you or giving you the 'silent treatment'
- Throwing things, slamming doors, punching walls, blocking exits.

Physical Abuse

- Making you watch someone else being hurt, or forcing you to hurt them too
- Hurting you e.g. by hitting, slapping, kicking or pinching
- Threatening or hurting a family pet

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Sexual Abuse

- Touching you in places you don't like or that makes you feel uncomfortable
- Making you take part in sexual activities
- Making you watch sexual images

How will I know if it's happening in my family?

It is very frightening to be lying awake listening to sounds of fighting, shouting or crying in another room. You may feel very alone and possibly ashamed of what is happening in your family. These things may happen to an adult you love or be directed at you. You may feel that should do more to help. It is normal to feel this way but remember:-

- It is not your fault
- It is not your mother's fault
- It is not your responsibility to keep your mother safe

You need to keep yourself safe; there are other adults who can help keep your mother safe if they know what is happening.

If you would like to read more about the stories of young people who have survived abuse in the home you can go to

www.notyourfault.org

By Linda Clements

With grateful thanks to my friends at Domestic Abuse Safety Unit, Welsh Women's Aid, Women's Refuge NZ & UK and the Crime Reduction Programme Domestic Violence Screening pilot 2001-2002

Linda Clements is a trainer working as part of the HMA team. For more information about how HMA can help you with your training needs contact info@hma.co.nz

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