



Myths & Facts about Domestic Violence and Children

Myth -- Children younger than 18 months are too young to be affected by domestic violence.

Fact – Research has shown that age is not a factor in experiencing the negative effects of domestic violence. In fact, research has shown that abuse and violence against the mother during pregnancy can have significant negative impacts on the fetus and after the child is born.

Myth -- Because the violence and abuse never happened in front of the kids, I'm sure they'll be OK.

Fact – Research shows that children experience the abuse and violence directly and second-hand by hearing it, seeing the aftermath, and feeling the lasting emotional and psychological trauma on the mother and in the household at large.

Myth -- My partner is a batterer, but he's also a very good father. In fact, the kids spend a lot of time with him, not so much with me.

Fact – Abuse and violence committed against a mother does not translate into healthy parenting as a father. The negative effects of these behaviors outweigh any other attempts at healthy fatherhood. When a father disrespects, undermines, threatens, or otherwise harms the mother, he does lasting harm to his children's relationship with him. And when a child spends most of the time with the abuser, it is not because there is a positive attachment, but rather because there is fear and guilt.

Myth -- My child is doing fine; getting straight A's, helps me around the house all the time, and is never in any trouble. Obviously, there is no ill effect from the abuse against me by her father.

Fact – Children respond to experiences of abuse in many different ways. Their grades can suffer significantly and they can become very despondent and unresponsive. They also can respond by overachieving at school and being extraordinarily helpful and agreeable. (Please see our webpage entitled Effects of Domestic Violence on Children [insert url here])

Myth -- My sons have always been aggressive! Boys will be boys!

Fact – Aggression cannot be linked with one simple origin, because we do know that many varying factors go into creating aggression in human beings. Aggression can, however, be learned. If cultural, social and other factors contribute heavily to a boy's normalized experience of violence and aggression, he will, indeed, be one of the boys assumed in this myth. In other words, if the culture boys brought up in is aggressive, teaches aggression, and is steeped in a culture of male violence, then, boys can grow up being aggressive. But if boys are taught, from the earliest age, that violence is not acceptable, that respect, trust, love and empathy are healthy attitudes and behaviors, then boys will, more than likely, grow up to be healthy, respectful, non-violent men.