

Helping Children Who Have Witnessed Domestic Violence

A Guide for Caregivers and Professionals

Affirm the violence is not their fault.

Children who live in violent homes often blame themselves for what is happening. It is important that the adults in their life let them know that it is not their fault, and they are not to blame.

Let them know you care.

Witnessing domestic violence can be scary. Children need to know they are loved and supported through words and actions. Spend safe, interactive quality time with the children.

Create consistency & structure in their lives.

Exposure to domestic violence can cause stress, instability, and uncertainty for children. By providing consistency and structure with routines and activities that children can predict and appropriately depend on, children can grow and heal.

Listen & validate their feelings on their terms.

Children exposed to domestic violence may have a lot of confusing feelings and fears. Children need the opportunity to express their feelings without judgment or interruption. Make sure they know they can talk to you when they are ready because their feelings are important to you. Never minimize, deny, or ignore their concerns.

Celebrate family's strengths.

Many families find strength in cultural traditions. Contribute to the children's sense of belonging and family pride by respecting, encouraging, and supporting the practice of traditions.

Communicate that violence is never okay.

Children who witness domestic violence regularly might become numb to it or normalize the violence. It is important to let them know that violence is never the answer.

Safety Planning with Children

1. Ask them what they can do, or have done, to keep themselves safe during incidents of violence.
2. Ask them to identify people they can call if they need help.
3. Help them identify safe places they can go such as their room, a neighbor's house, or a relative's house.
4. Encourage them to stay out of the way of the violence.
5. If they feel they are in danger and need to call 911, encourage them to find a phone where they will not be heard.
6. Validate their desire to want to help and encourage them to never try to physically stop the violence.

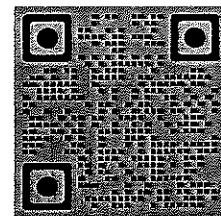
Florida Domestic Violence Hotline
Call or Chat at 1-800-500-1119
TDD: 800-621-4202
Florida Relay 711

National Domestic Violence Hotline
1-800-799-SAFE (7233)
1-800-787-3224 (TTY)

If you, your friends, or family members are in immediate danger call 911, or their local law enforcement agency.



Certified Domestic Violence Centers
provide confidential services at no
cost. Center Directory found at
www.FLDVTraining.org



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Sponsored by Women in Distress, Inc.
and the State of Florida Department of
Children and Families.

FLDVC
Women in Distress of Broward County
CASA of Marion & Putnam County
The Spring of Tampa Bay
FLORIDA DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COLLABORATIVE

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