

# TIPS ON DEALING WITH DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

## Talk to your child

- Tell your child that the violence is never their fault.
- Ask your child if they have any worries, for example at school, at home, with friends
- Listen to your child
- Give your child lots of cuddles and kisses
- Spend time together doing things you both enjoy
- Give simple and truthful explanations and responses that suit your child's age

## Talk about how your child is feeling

- Tell with your child what they are good at. For example, 'You run so fast' or 'You draw really well' or 'Well done'.
- Listen to your child and show that you understand that things are hard, scary, or frustrating for them.
- Let your child cry and be sad if they need to
- Talk with your child about ways of showing feelings, especially safe ways of showing anger
- Reassure your child that it is ok to be angry, it's just not okay to hurt anyone!
- Don't feel like you have to hide your own feelings but make sure you let your child know that whatever you are feeling, you will be okay.

All children need to learn to express their feelings and to know what behaviour is okay and what isn't.

# Where to get help

Every child is different and each develops at their own rate. Trauma or stress can mean that a child's development might be slower than average. Often your child will catch up when the violence has stopped and they feel safe again. The ideas mentioned in this brochure can help as well.

## Who can help me and my baby?

If you are worried about your child's development or if you would like some ideas to help them out, it might be good to talk with somebody whose opinion and knowledge you value.

Talking things through might also help you to feel better. This is just as important.

Some people who might be able to help are:

Gunnedah Family Support	6742 1515
Parent Help Line (24/7)	1300 130 052
Kids Help Line (24/7)	1800 551 800
Domestic Violence Line (24/7)	1800 656 463
Tamworth Women's Refuge (24/7)	1800 073 388
Child Protection Helpline (24/7)	132 111
Gunnedah Police	6742 9099
Gunnedah Hospital	6741 8000



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# FOR PARENTS OF A 5 TO 12 YEAR OLD

Who have experienced Domestic Violence

Children, regardless of their age, respond to what's going on around them. The effect of Domestic Violence on children and their recovery can depend on many things.

**YOU CAN DO A LOT TO HELP.**



# THE IMPACT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

## Domestic Violence and its effects

### What happens to teenagers experiencing Domestic Violence?

During or after an experience of domestic violence, your child is feeling a huge mix of emotions. Common feelings in primary aged children who have experienced violence in their family are:

- Confusion about what is happening and why
- Sadness about their parents fighting, about the separation, about their own losses
- Fear of you or themselves being hurt, of you being hurt, or of their other parent being 'taken away' by police
- Anger about what is happening

### How do Primary School Aged Children think ?

- Children are questioning many things and finding out how their world works.
- For children who have experienced violence, this might also affect how they make friends.
- They might try to keep their experiences a secret, especially from their school friends
- Your child might feel responsible for the violence or arguments, or for their parents breaking up.
- They might also feel split about how they feel about their parents.
- They might feel guilty or confused about loving someone who has hurt you or who has hurt them.
- The ways children see the world might be different to the ways we see things as adults, so its important to often ask your child how they are going.

### You and your Child

- You might find that experiences of violence have affected your relationship with your child.
- It might take time and patience to rebuild trust and communication between you.

### Will Domestic Violence effect my child forever?

Many people worry that the domestic violence will have an effect on their child forever. Children need time and support to recover from traumatic situations. Once the violence has stopped and they feel safe, your child can heal from their experience. If your child has experienced violence they might:

- Be withdrawn or aggressive (hurting self/others)
- Not cooperate with you
- Complain about feeling unwell (Tummy aches and headaches)
- Wet their bed
- Find it hard to make friends
- Have difficulties with school work or coping skills (for example they might find it hard to cope with stress)

### At age 5-8, your child might also:

- Have problems talking or using new words
- Be picky about food or not willing to eat
- Challenge adult authority, or become very cooperative and eager to please
- Not be able to share or take turns
- Not ask adults for help, or rely heavily on adults

### At age 8-10, your child might also:

- Not be able to express their feelings
- Be extremely active
- Find it hard to trust others
- Be isolated from friends and find it hard to share
- Show little interest or enthusiasm for anything

### At age 10-12, your child might also:

- Be argumentative
- Ask more questions for example "Why?" or "What if?"
- Blame one parent or the other (for example, they might be angry at you because 'Dad can't live at home anymore')
- Find it hard to express their feelings

### How can I help my child recover from a Domestic Violence situation?

- Give them lots of affection, care and reassurance (hugs, playing positive words)
- Give them simple, truthful explanations and responses (for example 'This is not your fault' and 'It is ok to love both me and your Dad')
- Be reassured it isn't their fault
- Encouragement to talk about their feelings and worries
- Get professional help if they show signs of behavioural or emotional problems

