

# TIPS ON DEALING WITH DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

## Feeding, eating and sleeping

- Babies in this situation might not be easy to feed.
- They might not be interested in food or they might refuse to eat.
- Older babies might be very picky.
- You might find your baby is unsettled or not sleeping well. It can help to try to stick to a regular routine of "feed, play, sleep".
- Be aware that sleeping and feeding problems can end up in a vicious circle, where one feeds into the other.

## Crying, screaming and distress

- A very difficult effect of violence on your baby, can be having them scream or cry more than usual, or become too quiet.
- Its important to make sure there are no physical reasons for your baby to be crying or being quiet.
- If the crying is driving you crazy, its okay to leave your baby in a safe place and step outside for a few minutes.
- If you do, make sure you check regularly that your baby is not in any danger.
- If your baby is being too quiet, use your face, your voice and toys to encourage them to interact with you.
- Seek professional advice if your baby continues to be too quiet.

## Illnesses

- Babies who have experienced violence might get lots of illnesses.
- This might be a reaction to stress or may be related to sleeping or feeding issues
- It might help to talk with your doctor

# 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

# FOR PARENTS OF A BABY (BIRTH - 1½)

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.**



 Zonta Club of Gunnedah Inc.  
Member of Zonta International  
*Advancing the Status of Women Worldwide*

# THE IMPACT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

## Domestic Violence and its effects

### What happens to children experiencing Domestic Violence?

During or after an experiences of domestic violence, your child will probably be feeling a huge mix of emotions. Common feelings in babies who have experienced violence in their family are:

- Fear
- Distress
- Anxiety

Babies are fully dependant on their carer and usually pick up on the emotions and stresses of those around them.

### How do Babies think ?

- Some people think that babies don't pick up on what's going on around them. This is not true.
- The early stages of a child's life are very important.
- This is when verbal language is forming and when a child learns to relate to other people.
- Your child can't talk yet, but is interacting with the world in many different ways.
- Their body language might give you many clues about how they are feeling. Eg; they might tense up when scared or they might smile when they are happy.
- If they are not confident or interested in you, they might not make eye contact with you.

### You and your Baby

- 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 baby forever?

Many people worry that the domestic violence will effect their child forever. Babies need time and support to recover from traumatic situations. Once the violence has stopped and they feel safe, your baby can heal from their experience.

If your child has experienced violence they:

- Might be fearful of new people, unknown voices or loud noises
- Might be slower to start rolling over, pulling themselves up, crawling, learning to walk and showing other physical signs of development like holding small objects
- Might not be responsive or interested in the world as other babies
- Might not develop or learn to talk as quickly as other babies
- Might be very distressed

In the short term, these kinds of difficulties can make things very tiring and stressful for you and your baby. Its important to look after yourself and to find support through these hard times

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

- Give them lots of affection, hugs, cuddles, rocking
- Respond to them with eye contact and with words
- Talk to them (your baby learns language from them before they are even born and the early months are very important)
- Keep to your routines

