

# TIPS ON DEALING WITH DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

## Talk to your toddler

- Tell your child that the violence is never their fault.
- Be patient; listen and watch what your child is showing you.
- Toddlers have a short attention span and don't always follow instructions. If they are not doing as you ask, try saying it another way.
- Toddlers also have a different view of time, so it can be helpful to talk about actions rather than minutes. Eg; Saying 'Sally, we can play with the game after you've finished your ice cream.'

## Talk about what behaviour is ok

- It's important for children to learn from an early age what behaviour is okay. Eg; it is never okay to hit or hurt anyone.
- If your child is not doing what you ask, try distracting them. Eg; if Con is throwing blocks near the window, you could say, 'Hey Con, come and help me make something with this playdough.'

## Talk about how your toddler is feeling

- 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 about 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.

# 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 TODDLER (1½-3)

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 children experiencing Domestic Violence?

During or after your child experiences domestic violence, they will probably be feeling a huge mix of emotions.

Common feelings in toddlers who have experienced violence in their family are:

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

Toddlers show their feelings through their behaviour and may use toys or play to act out things they have experienced.

They also might talk about what they have seen or experienced.

### How do toddlers think ?

- Toddlers are fully dependent and usually pick up on the emotions and stress of those around them.
- Toddlers think the whole world revolves around them and usually don't understand why their parents are fighting or why the family is not together anymore.
- They often believe that the violence is their fault.

It's really important to ask your child regularly how they are feeling.

### You and your Toddler

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

### Will Domestic Violence effect my baby forever?

Many people worry that domestic violence will effect 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:

- Feel responsible for arguments they hear
- Be very clingy or unwilling to try new things
- Be difficult to understand or use baby talk
- Find it hard to share
- Withdraw, become quiet, not play much
- Have difficult behaviour (for example, doing the opposite of what is being asked)
- Be aggressive towards other people - including you (for example, biting, kicking, hitting)
- Wet their bed, have bad dreams or trouble sleeping
- Be picky or not interested in food

### How can I help my pre-schooler recover from a Domestic Violence situation?

- Give them lots of affection, care and reassurance (using hugs, play and words)
- Give them simple and truthful explanations and responses
- Encourage them to make and act on choices .

All children need to learn to express their feelings and know what behavior is okay.

