



CONSEQUENCES OF EXPOSURE TO SITUATIONS OF
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
IN CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



Children and young people exposed to domestic violence are at risk due to several problems that can be caused during their development, even when they are not the direct target of the aggressions. These problems are similar to those seen in children

and young people who suffer physical abuse.

Conclusion: any form of violence in the family can harm their development.

Possible consequences of living with domestic violence:

- Sleep disorders
- Anxiety
- Long term grief/depression
- Low self-esteem
- Learning difficulties
- Not being able to distinguish between right and wrong
- Isolation
- Feeling of insecurity
- Feeling threatened by the aggression
- Feeling that their bad behaviour is the reason for the aggression towards the victim
- Imitating and learning the violent behaviour they see at home
- Starting to think that aggression is "normal"
- Imposing their will through physical intimidation or aggression
- Spending more time away from home to get away from the violence
- Using the wrong coping mechanisms to escape violence, e.g. drug use, criminal activities...
- Difficulties establishing healthy relationships
- Getting involved in violent relationships

Here are a few ways to support your child:

- Talk, play, or draw pictures about things that frighten you
- Don't pretend that there's nothing going on
- Explain in few words and in a way that they can understand what has happened
- Explain to your child that what happened is not their fault ("It's not your fault when Mum and Dad argue")
- Build a secure environment around your child, including setting aside regular times for sleeping, eating, napping, and playing
- Show them on a daily basis that you love them (by hugging them, cuddling them, or telling them you love them)
- Do fun things with your child (go to a playground, read them a story...)
- Tell them nice things about their behaviour
- Stop your child from behaving aggressively (verbally or physically hurting others). Tell them that hurting others is not OK
- Teach them peaceful ways to solve problems and praise them when they put them into practice
- Stop them from watching violent TV programmes and playing violent computer games (violent images can stimulate aggression and also scare them)
- Teach them how to treat others with respect
- Be firm and fair with them even when you are angry

Useful contacts:

CPCJ of Odemira 283 320 915

GNR (National Republican Guard of Portugal) 283 990 020

GAVA (Victim Support Office) 969 861 953

National Social Emergency Line 144

Emergency Number 112

