

High Conflict and Violence in the Home: Impact on Children

Disagreements and conflict are a normal and expected part of any relationship. If you would like more information about healthy conflict resolution please see the tip sheet titled “Skills for Intimate Partner Conflict Resolution.” However, when high levels of conflict and violence occur in the home, every member of the family, including the children are impacted. Even if your child is not directly involved, seeing and hearing arguing, yelling, and violence within the home can cause lasting effects.

Some children who witness conflict and violence display higher rates of anxiety, low self-esteem, depression, and anger and temperament problems than children who do not witness violence in the home. These effects can vary based on age and/or developmental stage of the child.

Impacts and Common Effects

<p>Emotional</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feelings of shame, guilt, embarrassment and self-blame • Conflicting feelings toward parents • Increased fear including fear of abandonment, fear of expressing emotions, fear of the unknown and/or fear of injury • Increased feelings of anger • Feelings of helplessness and powerlessness • Feeling nervous and anxious 	<p>Social</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isolation from friends and relatives • Difficulty trusting others, especially adults • Difficulty managing anger or resolving problems • Increased social involvement and/or avoiding home • Tendencies for bullying or being bullied • Engaging in relationship violence • Becoming a victim of relationship violence
<p>Behavioral</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acting out or withdrawing • New aggressive or passive behaviors • Refusing to go to school or having trouble at school • Taking on the role of parent or caregiver • Lying to avoid confrontation • Excessive attention seeking • Bedwetting and nightmares • Increased dependency on caregiver • Quick changes in mood 	<p>Physical</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical complaints like headaches and stomachaches • Shortened attention span • Feeling overly tired and lethargic • Frequently becoming ill • Regression in developmental milestones such as potty-training • High-risk play and disregard for safety • Self-harm tendencies



What Parents Can Do

Supporting and nurturing your child can support the healing process. Limiting your child's exposure to conflict and violence whenever possible is the best way to decrease negative effects. **You can also help your child by:**

Trust and Respect

Acknowledge your child's right to have their own feelings, friends, activities and opinions. Encourage independence, and respect their feelings.

Believe in them

Provide Emotional Security

Talk and act in a way that will allow your child to feel safe and comfortable expressing themselves to you and others.

Be gentle and dependable

Provide Physical Security

Teach your child personal hygiene skills and how to eat healthy. Monitor their safety and try to maintain a consistent routine whenever possible.

Provide a Safe Environment

Provide Positive Discipline

Be consistent and ensure that rules are appropriate for their age and developmental stage. Be clear about limits and offer reasonable choices when possible. Use positive discipline to give instruction, not to punish.

Be consistent and supportive

Give Time

Spend time listening to your child and playing with them. Show interest in what your child is saying and doing. When possible, try to participate and show interest in their activities.

Be there for them

Encourage and Support

Spend time teaching your child new skills and recognize their improvements. Allow your child to make mistakes in a safe environment and encourage them to make good decisions though modeling.

Celebrate their victories

Give Affection

Give your child lots of hugs and speak in a nice and loving way. Always be affectionate when your child is physically or emotionally hurt.

Love them

Care for Yourself

Give yourself personal time to relax and remain healthy. Try to maintain friendships with adults who support you and your child.

You matter too!

