

Impact of Domestic Abuse on Children

Podcast Transcript

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Domestic violence affects everyone in the family, including children. Although children may not be the direct targets of violence in their home, the effect of witnessing violence can have a profoundly harmful impact on their lives. In fact, research indicates that children exposed to violence in their home often suffer severe emotional and developmental difficulties not unlike those of children who are victims of abuse or neglect themselves.

When children witness abuse, over time they may begin to believe that violence at home is normal. Studies indicate that they may display more anxiety, depression, anger, and self-esteem problems than children who have not witnessed violence at home. They may also learn to avoid talking about their own feelings, blame themselves for the abuse or have physical symptoms of illness as a result of stress. Witnessing abuse can make children feel lonely and isolated from their friends and, in the worst case scenario, lead them to act out the violence they have observed. Violence against others is often a learned behavior that spans generations.

Young children and their caregivers deserve to be safe. If you are concerned for the safety of yourself, your children or a family that is experiencing domestic violence, help is available. If on or near a military installation, victim advocates are available to work with victims to address their concerns and help them access the services they might need to keep themselves and their children safe. In a majority of cases, victim advocates can provide confidential advocacy services under the military's restricted reporting policy. This enables the victim to receive medical care and assistance with safety planning without an abuse investigation or notification to the abuser's command. To find a victim advocate, call the installation operator or Military OneSource at 1-800-342-9647 and ask for the number of the domestic abuse victim advocate. Immediate assistance is also available through the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE. If the victim makes an unrestricted report to law enforcement or the commander, the Family Advocacy Program staff can assess the victim's children and provide treatment they need to cope with their experience.

You can help reduce the impact of domestic violence. Get involved - know the resources - offer help.

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For more information, visit Military OneSource at <http://www.militaryonesource.mil>, an official Department of Defense website.