

Infants are changed by the choices domestic abusers make...



Infants absorb all of the sights and sounds that surround them...good or bad.

Changes can be sudden after a traumatic incident, or gradual in response to the daily dynamics of abuse

Change can be visible, such as changes in their behavior, or on the inside such as changes in how they think and feel.

*“A child who lives with violence is forever changed, but not forever ‘damaged.’ There’s a lot we can do to make tomorrow better.”*



Allison Cunningham & Linda Baker (2007). Little Eyes, Little Ears How Violence Against a Mother Shapes Children as They Grow. Center for Children and Families in the Justice System.

*If you are concerned...*

about how a domestic abuser may be impacting you or someone you know, help is available.

Caring Unlimited offers confidential assistance free of charge to anyone who is in an intimate relationship with an abuser.

- Individual Advocacy
- Support and Education Groups
- Legal Assistance and Court Advocacy
- Emergency Shelter
- Transitional Housing and Services
- Community Education, Training and Consultation

24 HOUR HOTLINE  
1-800-239-7298

CaringUnlimited

York County Domestic Violence Program

POB 590, Sanford, Maine 04073

Office: (207) 490-3227

Fax: (207) 490-2186

email: [mail@caring-unlimited.org](mailto:mail@caring-unlimited.org)

web: [www.caring-unlimited.org](http://www.caring-unlimited.org)

Caring Unlimited is a member of the  
Maine Coalition to End Domestic  
Violence

CaringUnlimited  
York County's Domestic Violence Program

## Effects of Domestic Abusers on Infants



...and how you can help  
build  
their resiliency

24 HOUR HOTLINE  
1-800-239-7298

## Child Development

What changes are infants experiencing?

- Absorbing information through their five senses
- Interpreting others' emotions through tone of voice and facial expression
- Forming secure attachments and bonds based on trust
- Increasing their activity and exploring the world through play
- Learning about social interaction and relationships



Infants are not passive witnesses to an abuser's violence, they may...

- Be at risk of being injured while in their mother's arms
- Hear sudden and unpredictable loud noises associated with abuse
- Be unable to explore surroundings safely
- Feel afraid, but be unable to communicate their fear, understand what is happening, or make themselves safer



As a result of exposure to a domestic abuser, infants may experience any of the following:

- ◇ Sleep and eating disturbances
- ◇ Colic, illness
- ◇ Non-responsiveness
- ◇ Nervousness, jumpiness
- ◇ Distress, confusion, depression
- ◇ Imitation of violence/aggression during play
- ◇ Poor formation of parent-child bond
- ◇ Failure to thrive
- ◇ Physical, emotional, sexual abuse
- ◇ Death

The best way an infant can heal from exposure to a domestic abuser is through a close bond with the non-abusive parent.

Other factors that build an infant's resiliency include...

- < Knowing it is not their fault
- < A sense of safety
- < Routines and predictability
- < Structure
- < Consistent rules
- < Consistent consequences
- < A close bond with siblings
- < Attachment relationships with adults in their community



References: Bancroft, Lundy *The Batterer As Parent*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publishing, 1993. *Domestic Violence Crisis Advocate's Training Manual*. Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence: 2004.