

School-aged children are changed by the choices domestic abusers make...



Children 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

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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 School-Aged Children



...and how you can help build  
their resiliency

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## Child Development

What changes are school-aged children experiencing?

- Increasing emotional awareness of self and others
- Thinking about right and wrong becomes more complex (focus on fairness and intent)
- Increasing influence from outside the family (peers, school)
- Academic and social success has an impact on self-concept
- Developing empathy and controlling impulses
- Increasing identification with same-sex parent



School-aged children are not passive witnesses to an abuser's violence, they may...

- Feel they caused the violence and try to stop it themselves
- Feel responsible for the welfare of their siblings or parents both during and between incidents
- Feel scared that there will be no one to take care of them if the non-abusive parent is hurt
- Fear that the non-abusive parent can't protect them



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

- ◇ Sleep and eating disturbances
- ◇ Regression (bed wetting, fear of the dark)
- ◇ Embarrassment about their family
- ◇ Insecurity, withdrawal
- ◇ Depression, anxiety, low self-esteem
- ◇ Imitation of violence/aggression during play
- ◇ Early interest in alcohol, drugs and/or sexual activity
- ◇ Running away from home
- ◇ Physical, emotional, sexual abuse
- ◇ Death

The best way a school-aged child can heal from exposure to domestic abuse is through a close bond with the non-abusive parent.

Other factors that build a child'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.

