

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



Toddlers 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 Toddlers



...and how you can help build
their resiliency

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Child Development

What changes are toddlers experiencing?

- ❑ Learning appropriate ways to regulate, express, and verbalize feelings
- ❑ Increasing control over bodily functions
- ❑ Defining their world based on their own experiences and observations
- ❑ Identifying with family and forming ideas about gender roles based on social messages
- ❑ Blossoming individuality



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

- ❑ Hope that a superhero will come to rescue them
- ❑ Disconnect from others by focusing on something else like toys or television
- ❑ Feel they caused the violence, blame themselves and try to stop it themselves
- ❑ Feel responsible when the non-abusive parent is hurt or upset
- ❑ Worry about being able to protect themselves



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

- ◇ Delayed toileting
- ◇ Speech problems
- ◇ Sleep and eating disturbances
- ◇ Insecurity, withdrawal
- ◇ Nervous, jumpy, hyper-vigilance
- ◇ Depression, anxiety, low self-esteem
- ◇ Problems relating to other children
- ◇ Controlling behaviors with other children
- ◇ Acting out violently
- ◇ Physical, emotional, sexual abuse
- ◇ Death

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

Other factors that build a toddler'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.

