

Infants are changed by violence and abuse in the home...



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 domestic abuse may be impacting you or someone you know, help is available.

Caring Unlimited offers confidential assistance free of charge to anyone abused in an intimate relationship.

- 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 Abuse on Children

### Infants Newborn to 24 Months



The impact that family violence can have 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
- Growing and developing physically
- 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 family violence, they may...

- Be at risk of being hit or injured while in their mother's arms
- Hear sudden and unpredictable loud noises associated with abuse
- Have their basic needs neglected due to lack of parental response
- Be unable to explore surroundings safely because of instability in the home
- Feel the tension, but be unable to understand what is happening.



### As a result of family violence children may experience any of the following:

- ◇ Sleep and eating disturbances
- ◇ Colic, illness
- ◇ Non-responsiveness or not cuddly
- ◇ Nervousness, jumpiness
- ◇ Distress, confusion, depression
- ◇ Trauma, fear
- ◇ 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 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
- ♥ Community support



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.