

Impacts on Children



Key Aspects of Development

Infants and Toddlers

- Take in information from the world around them through their senses. ⇨ Loud noises and vivid visual images associated with violence can be distressing.
- Form secure attachments. ⇨ Parents may not be able to consistently respond to the infant's needs which may negatively affect the parent-child bond.
- Become more active explorers of their world and learn through play. ⇨ Fear and instability may inhibit exploration and play; imitating in play may be related to witnessed aggression.
- Learn about social interaction and relationships from what they hear and observe in their families. ⇨ Learn about aggression in observed interactions.

Preschoolers

- Learn how to express aggression and anger, as well as other emotions, in appropriate ways. ⇨ Learn unhealthy ways of expressing anger and aggression; possibly confused by conflicting messages (e.g., what I see vs. what I'm told).
- Think in egocentric ways. ⇨ May attribute violence to something they have done.
- Form ideas about gender roles based on social messages. ⇨ Learn gender roles associated with violence and victimization.
- Increased physical independence (dressing self, etc.). ⇨ Instability may inhibit independence; may see regressive behaviors.

School-aged Children (6 to 11 years)

- Increased emotional awareness of self and others. ⇨ More awareness of own reactions to violence at home and of impact on others (e.g., concerns about mother's safety, father being charged).
- Increased complexity in thinking about right and wrong; emphasis on fairness and intent. ⇨ Possibly more susceptible to adopting rationalizations heard to justify violence (e.g., alcohol causes violence; victim deserved abuse).
- Academic and social success at school has primary impact on self-concept. ⇨ Ability to learn may be decreased due to impact of violence (e.g., distracted); may miss positive statements or selectively attend to negatives or evoke negative feedback.
- ⇨ May learn gender roles associated with intimate partner abuse (e.g., males as perpetrators – females as victims).