

# Children Who Live Domestic Violence

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It is a dangerous myth that just because batterers abuse their adult victims doesn't mean they will abuse children in their home. Not only are abusers harmful and neglectful as parents, they are willing to use children as "collateral damage" to maintain their dominance in their intimate relationships. We minimize abusers' direct impact on children when we make "Using Children" a symptom of coercive control against adult victims, instead of recognizing that perpetrators deliberately use the exact same tactics of power and control on their child victims in order to gain their partner's compliance. Here are examples of how:

## Grooming & Luring:

- Offers children gifts, special favors or privileges to influence victim to "go back"
- Keeps old/makes new promises to gain children's compliance
- Gives children access to alcohol, drugs, pornography, etc.
- Bribes children to come live with him
- Temporarily helps with household chores
- Briefly allows contact with friends to gain child's compliance
- Enlists children to entice or cajole partner back into the relationship

## Exploiting Male Privilege & Status:

- Treats children like servants
- Dictates family roles and duties
- Refuses or fails to fulfill parenting responsibilities
- Uses status in the community or exploits professional relationships to discredit children's disclosures
- Cultivates favor with community professionals to avoid accountability for abuse

## Spiritual Conflict:

- Misuses religious texts to justify child abuse
- Claims to be all-powerful, all-knowing
- Forces children to participate in or witness ritual sacrifice of animals
- Refuses to allow children to participate in religious activities during his parenting time
- Coercing the adult victim to stay "for the children's sake"
- Forcing or manipulating children to do things they know are wrong

## Emotional Abuse:

- Constantly criticizes, belittles, punishes or puts children down
- Talks over, interrupts or humiliates children
- Minimizes children's accomplishments and achievements
- Yells, shouts or swears often
- Calls children vulgar or hurtful names
- Disregards children's feelings and opinions
- Uses guilt or "The Silent Treatment" as a means of control
- Characterizes children as uncooperative, difficult, paranoid
- Uses the children to deliver messages, gifts, etc., to adult victim
- Modeling poor relationship skills

## Economic Control:

- Withholds child support, or other court payments, forcing family into poverty
- Confiscates children's earnings
- Dictates how parent victim spends child support payments
- Uses children's social security numbers to access credit
- Tells children that adult victim is making him poor because he has to pay child support

## Medical Neglect:

- Withholds necessary medications from child
- Denies child treatment for injuries or illness
- Refuses to care for sick child
- Denies routine medical or dental care for child, or drops medical insurance for child

## Legal Harassment:

- Coerces children into doing illegal acts
- Threatens to report partner to child protection
- Threatens to take custody of the children, or hurt them
- Uses visitation with the children or parenting classes to access or harass partner
- Pressures children to write letters to court or other professionals denouncing adult victim

## Monitoring & Stalking:

- Texts nasty-grams to children
- Uses technology to track family's location
- Interrogates child about partner's daily routine or activities
- Uses child to spy on or contact parent victim
- Leaves gifts or "messages" to send back to adult victim in spite of restraining order

## Deprivation & Isolation:

- Deprives children of sleep
- Deprives children of basic necessities
- Sabotages family's housing, school, activities, vehicle, etc.
- Cuts off utilities when partner gets restraining order
- Sabotages or denies children's relationships with others
- Denies children access to outside services
- Forces family into homelessness

## Psychological Torment:

- "Crazy-making" (playing mind games)
- Makes gestures meant to frighten or intimidate children
- Threatening to hurt the children if they disclose abuse
- Threatens to harm or kidnap children
- Abuses or kills animals/family pets
- Destroys children's personal belongings
- Punches walls near or throws things at child
- Drives recklessly with child in the car
- Menaces children with weapons
- Hurts child to torment or punish adult victim
- Forcing child to participate in hurting victim parent

## Sexual Coercion & Force:

- Molests children
- Grabs children's breasts or genitals
- Has sex with intimate partners where children will see/hear
- Watches pornography when children are up and about, in their presence
- "Girlfriends" children with inappropriate gifts (lingerie, etc.)
- Traffics or exploits children for money

## Physical Assault:

- Restrains or prevents children from leaving or calling for help\*
- Bites, spits on, grabs, pinches, shoves, pulls, slaps, elbows, knees, head-butts, hair-pulls, twists, kicks, punches, strangles, smothers, burns, stabs, or shoots children
- "Accidentally" hurting children as he assaults victim

*Note: This list is illustrative only, and is not intended to be an all-inclusive list.*

