



Supporting Children and Youth With Experiences of Violence

How you can support your child:

- Spend extra time with children, making an extra effort to show children you love them.
- Encourage them to be open with you about their feelings and thoughts.
- Praise them for their successes, no matter how small or big.
- Provide babies and young children with the extra physical attention they may need, such as holding or comforting.
- Work on building or improving trust between you and your children.
- Reassure them that you will do your best to be there for them.
- Be clear on what they can expect from you, and at home. Having a routine is helpful: Mealtimes, bedtimes, wake-up times, homework, and self-care such as teeth cleaning and showering.
- Encourage positive behaviour by introducing consequences for negative behavior, such as time-outs and removal of privileges.
- Create household rules such as “no hitting.”
- Use non-violent methods of discipline, such as time-outs, star charts, and giving consequences that avoid exposing children to hurtful punishment.
- As older children also need guidance, come up with a check-in system, and a curfew for youth.
- Make sure children know that violence is NOT okay.
- Help create a safety plan.
- Have a safety plan for yourself.
- Be available for support, encouragement, and help with homework and school projects.
- If you are able to take them to parks, libraries, community centres, or museums, do so.
- Learn about what your child is interested in, and encourage this.
- When children are angry:
 - Calm yourself first if necessary.
 - Take deep breaths.
 - Think calming thoughts.
 - Perhaps leave the room for a few minutes.
 - Remind yourself, “They are just kids,” and, “They are not doing this to deliberately bug me.”
- Accept their feelings: Try saying, “You are really angry,” but tell them it is NOT okay to hit/swear at/be disrespectful to others.



- Be sure that you are setting a good example, and are respectful. You are an important role model for your children.
- If your child continues to hit/swear, send them into another room to cool off. If you have concerns that they are so angry that they might hurt themselves or destroy property, ask them to sit quietly where you can see them. You may need to hold a younger child.
- When they are calm, problem-solve with them about other ways to handle the issue, such as teaching them to use “I” statements: “When you take my doll without permission, I feel angry/hurt/sad.”
- Teach them other ways to express anger: Exercise, talking, writing/drawing about their feelings, skipping, scribbling on paper then tearing it up.

Things that aren’t supportive:

- Don’t give mixed messages to children such as, “Do as I say, but not as I do.” Set a good example.
- Never hit the child as punishment. No hitting, shoving, or pushing.
- Don’t get angry and say things you don’t mean, such as, “You’re just like your father,” or, “I wish you’d never been born.”

What you can say to children:

- Violence is never OK.
- I’m sorry that you heard /saw/ are aware of it. It must have been very scary for you.
- You didn’t cause it; it’s not your fault.
- There was nothing you could do to stop it or prevent it.
- Tell me how you feel about it.
- No kid deserves to experience violence in their family.
- I will do my best to keep you safe.
- We need to talk about what to do to keep you safe if it happens again.
- I care about you. You are important.

Source: Adapted from BC Children’s Hospital. (2005). Helping My Child: A guide to supporting children exposed to domestic violence.