

BIBLICAL COUNSELING MINISTRY
IMPACT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FROM A PSYCHOLOGICAL
PERSPECTIVE

(Through The Eyes of A Child)



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- I. **Introduction** – overall view of Domestic Violence and the Impact it has had in the past, present, and hopefully discontinued in the future.
- II. **Definition of the Word “Impact.”**
 - The Merriman-Webster Dictionary states that “Impact” is a force communicated as in a collision, forceful contact.
 - Webster’s New World Dictionary states that “Impact” is the power to move feelings and influence thinking.
- III. **Definition of the Word “Domestic.”**
 - The Merriman-Webster Dictionary states that “Domestic” is relating to the Household or the Family.
 - Webster’s New World Dictionary states that “Domestic” is of the Home or Family; Home Loving.
- IV. **Definition of the Word “Violence.”**
 - The Merriman-Webster Dictionary states that “Violence” is exertion of physical force to injure or abuse.
 - Webster’s New World Dictionary states that “Violence” is harm done by violating one’s rights.
- V. **Definition of the Word “Psychological.”**
 - The Merriman-Webster Dictionary states that “Psychological” is the science of the mind, behavior and mental processes.
 - Webster’s New World Dictionary states that “Psychological” is the science of the mind and mental/emotional processes.

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VI. **Definition of “Domestic Violence” and How to Recognize It.”**

Domestic Violence happens when one member of a household harms another member of the household. It is usually part of an effort to control, and it can be emotional or physical in nature. Often, it is a combination of both. Domestic Violence includes pushing, punching, slapping, choking, and beating. But it also can include name-calling, threats, put downs, and deprivation. The victim can be a child, a parent, or an older person living in the home. Domestic Violence knows no limits, it can affect anyone anywhere.

VII. **“General” Statistical Data Concerning Domestic Violence.**

It is estimated that 960,000 incidents of domestic violence occur per year to 4 million women who are physically abused by their husbands or live-in partners. Between 600,000 and 6 million women experience domestic violence each year.

Women are 5-8 times more likely than men to be victimized by an intimate partner. This accounts for about 21% of violent crimes experienced by women and 2% by men. Ninety two percent (92%) of all domestic violence crimes are committed by men against women. In 1996, among all female murder victims in the US, 30% were slain by their husbands or boyfriends. Thirty-one Thousand Two Hundred Sixty (31,260) were murdered by an intimate partner from 1976-1997. Family violence costs are estimated to be from \$5 to \$10 billion yearly in medical expenses, police and court costs, shelters and foster care, sick leave, absenteeism, and non-productivity. Husbands and boyfriends commit over 13,000 acts of violence against women in the workplace every year.

VIII. **“Possible” Ways Domestic Violence Can Impact “Women.”**

Domestic Violence frequently begins or intensifies during a pregnancy. About 25%-40% of all women who are battered are battered during pregnancy. Moreover, the abuse of pregnant women crosses all socio-economic and cultural lines.

Pregnancy means change in a relationship. A new baby may be perceived as threatening to a jealous man who will soon have to share his partner’s time and attention with the child. In addition, having a child can evoke anger if the batterer resents the added responsibility.

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The pregnancy may represent a threat to a controlling man because each time his mate goes to the doctor there are more people who might influence her to leave the abuser.

Finally, battering may be triggered later in pregnancy if an insecure man places undue emphasis on his mate's appearance and begins to dislike his partner's changing body.

A man, who responds to stress, frustration, or anger with violence, may specifically target the source of that stress. A batterer may target the woman's belly for his punches or kicks. A batterer also may choose to hurt his partner, whom he feels has wronged him, by harming the baby.

The consequences of battering during pregnancy are very serious indeed. Blows to the abdomen may lead to miscarriages and still births.

Pregnant women who are physically battered can result in fetal fractures, maternal and fetal hemorrhage, rupture of the uterus, liver, or spleen, premature separation of the placenta, or premature delivery.

Pregnant women in battering relationships have an increased risk of low birth weight. In addition, battered pregnant women are more likely than non-battered women to report drug and alcohol abuse during the pregnancy, thus placing the baby at risk for fetal alcohol syndrome or drug addiction.

IX. **"Possible" Ways Domestic Can Impact Children**

Feeling of fear, anger, depression, grief, shame, despair, and distrust

- A sense of powerlessness
- Physical reactions such as stomach cramps, headaches, sleeping and eating difficulties, frequent illness
- Shows development capacities such as poor school performance, low self-esteem, difficulty relating to peers
- Substance abuse and/or misuse
- Behavioral problems such as running away from home, aggressive language and behavior, acting out

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- Learning that violence is a legitimate means for resolving conflict, or for obtaining control of a situation

Types of Depression on the Rise in Women

>Postpartum-depression that occurs in a woman who has had a baby.

Post partum depression is persistent and possibly severe mood changes that usually occur after childbirth.

Types of Depression on the Rise in Children

>Endogenous-depression that supposedly comes unexpectedly, with no obvious cause, however, is a result of the mother's depression

Type of Depression on the Rise in the Entire Family

>Reactive-depression may be caused by drama and trauma in the family dynamics.

As a result of the mother's depression and possibly the child, the entire family may experience reactive depression.

X. Potential Psychological Effects of Domestic Violence to Consider

If domestic violence is occurring during pregnancy, prospective parents must consider what their baby is already "taking in" through its senses. In other words, the mother's reactions to domestic violence can affect the baby.

First ask yourself, what can the baby hear? Studies have consistently shown that people who play foreign language tapes or classical music for their unborn babies stimulate articulation, personality, emotional and social growth. Just as an older fetus can hear and respond to familiar voices, or react strongly to different kinds of music, a fetus also can hear the sounds of domestic violence including loud arguments, screams, threats, shattering glass, and furniture being broken.

For example, verbal battering means frequently criticizing, belittling, blaming, shaming, or swearing at the expectant mother. Such behaviors are intended to hurt, frighten, or intimidate the mother. We owe our children nothing less than to understand how verbal violence may affect them. Possible areas to consider are as follows:

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- What sensations might the baby feel if the mother is being dragged across the room by her hair, and she is screaming from the diaphragm?
- What does the baby experience if the mother is being choked and she is gasping for air?
- How might the baby react if the mother is being choked and she is gasping for air?
- What happens to the baby if the mother “goes cold” with terror when she finds that her partner has destroyed her car or killed her pet?
- What chemical changes may occur in the mother and baby if the mother finds her precious heirlooms broken, or her lovingly-tended plants uprooted? How might the baby react to her sadness and humiliation?
- What does the baby experience or how does the baby react if the mother falls down the stairs fleeing from her attacker, or if she is kicked down the stairs by her baterer?

Finally, “If sleep is being disrupted frequently by battering episodes, what effect might this have on the baby?” One may consider the following, if the mother’s rest is being violated on a regular basis:

- If a sleeping mother is awoken suddenly, is the baby jolted awake, too?
- If the mother is under siege for hours, is the baby at peace?

XI. How Domestic Violence Affect Children

From what has been written one can see the impact Domestic Violence has on women, but what about the child? Domestic Violence can manifest itself in the development of the child cognitively, emotionally, physically and socially prior to birth and through their life span. How the child sees the Domestic Violence can determine how they interact with others. Social Learning Theory can be played out later in a child’s life by what they

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hear and see. What it means is that a child can move through a process known as Observation, Imitation, and Reinforcement. What they see can evolve into actions, what they mimic can evolve into behavior patterns, what they see, and mimic can evolve into character and destiny. The reinforcement is when those actions are applied and solidified in their values and views in relationships. Simply put, what they experience can be how they react to others and their own expectations.

(Children Are Witnesses)

Children do not have to be physically or verbally abused to be hurt by domestic violence. Hearing or seeing the abuse of one parent by the other takes a huge toll on kids.

They may...

- Develop physical and/or mental problems that can last a lifetime
- Grow up believing violence is a normal part of family life
- Be more likely to be abusive as adults if they are males, and more passive and withdrawn if they are females
- Live in daily fear of what to expect at home. Their lives may be filled with confusion, chaos, anger, and tension that can lead to lifelong fear and inability to trust others.
- Be isolated by an abusive parent who shuts off the family from outside help or support.

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- Feel responsible for the abuse and powerless to stop it

Note: Even if children are supposed to be in bed asleep, more than likely they hear the violence.

(Children Are Direct Targets)

Children are sometimes intentionally hurt by an abusive parent, or they get caught in the middle of a domestic Violence situation and are “accidentally” hurt or even fatally injured.

(Kids may suffer)

- Physical abuse (shoving, hitting with hands or objects, burning)
- Sexual abuse (incest or assault)
- Emotional abuse (name-calling, threat of harm or harm of a pet, other threats, bribes, putting kids in the middle)
- Neglect (failing to provide healthcare, food, clothing)

<http://www.turningpointsservices.org/notramecdvchildrenattacts.htm>

XII. Some “Possible” Specific Behaviors Learned by Young Males and Young Females Because of Experiencing Domestic Violence

<u>MALES</u>	<u>FEMALES</u>
Learning that males are violent	Learning that violence is normal/expected
Learning to disrespect women	Learning that women do not get respect
Using violence in his relationships	Accepting violence in her relationships
Insecurity about being a man	Becoming pregnant from sexual abuse

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“Get rid of all bitterness, rage, and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.” “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as Christ God forgave us.” Eph. 4:31-32 NIV

“If you keep biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.” Gal. 5:15 NIV

Disclaimer

This Publication on Domestic Violence is intended to help one understand Domestic Violence and the impact it has on families and especially children. It is to Bless the Body of Christ (Mind, Body and Spirit) in our relationships with each other and GOD.