

CHILDREN EXPOSED TO VIOLENCE AGAINST THEIR MOTHER

Identifying and Dealing With the Effects of Children's Victimization

A Manual for Teachers

Produced by
UNESCO Chair in Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment,
University of Cyprus



Funded by
- The European Commission, Daphne III Programme (action grants 2007-2013)
Project VI.C.T.I.M.S (2009-2011, JLS/2008/DAP3/AG/1157)
- University of Cyprus

Sensitizing and Creating Awareness on the Subject of Children's Exposure to Domestic Violence

CHILDREN EXPOSED TO VIOLENCE AGAINST THEIR MOTHER Identifying and Dealing With the Effects of Children's Victimization

A Manual for Teachers

Produced by

UNESCO Chair in Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment,
University of Cyprus

Funded by

- The European Commission, Daphne III Programme (action grants 2007-2013)
Project VI.C.T.I.MS (2009-2011, JLS/2008/DAP3/AG/1157)
- University of Cyprus



The content of this manual derives from the results of the European Project VI.C.T.I.M.S (2009-2011, JLS/2008/DAP3/AG/1157) which was funded by the Daphne III Programme (action grants 2007-2013). The countries which participated in this Project were Cyprus (University of Cyprus), Italy (University of Rome Tre), Romania (University of Oradea), and Slovakia (University of Presov).

The team of manuals' production

Mary Koutselini
Floria Valanidou
Sandra Chistolini
Monica - Liana Secui
Iveta Kovalcikova

Graphic Design

Constantinos Marinis
Floria Valanidou

The content of this manual cannot be reproduced for publication without the written permission of the UNESCO Chair in Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment of the University of Cyprus.

Copyright © 2011 All rights reserved
UNESCO Chair in Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
University of Cyprus

<http://www.ucy.ac.cy/goto/unesco/el-GR/Home.aspx>
<http://www.ucy.ac.cy/victims>

AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This manual reflects the consensus views of the group of researchers - scientists who have collaborated on the European Project VI.C.T.I.MS, partners of the UNESCO Chair in Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. The leaders and members of the national teams were:

Sandra Chistolini, *Professor of General and Social Pedagogy, Department of Education Sciences, University of Rome Tre*

Roberto Cipriani, Marina D'Amato, Diana Palotta & Matteo Villanova

Iveta Kovalcikova, *Associate Professor of Pedagogy, Department of Pre-school and Elementary Pedagogy and Psychology, University of Presov*

Peter Babincak, Katarina Fuchsova, Slavka Karkoskova & Gabriela Mikulaskova

Monica - Liana Secui, *Associate Professor of Social Psychology, Department of Psychology, University of Oradea*

Carmen Bora, Magda Danciu, Alina Decsei-Radu, Angelica Halmajan & Daniela Roman

Authors

Mary Koutselini

Professor

Chairholder of the UNESCO Chair in Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Coordinator of the Project VI.C.T.I.MS

Department of Education

University of Cyprus

Floria Valanidou

Teacher

PhD Candidate in Curriculum and Instruction

Main Researcher for the Project VI.C.T.I.MS

Department of Education

University of Cyprus



CHILDREN EXPOSED TO VIOLENCE AGAINST THEIR MOTHER

A teacher's manual to sensitize, create awareness and suggest supportive practices adopted at school

CONTENTS

1. Identity of the Project VI.C.T.I.MS (2009 - 2011) Funded by the Daphne III Programme	7
2. Considering the Importance of the Subject	11
3. Children Exposed to Violence Against their Mother. Common Mistakes from School Reality	14
4. Defining Domestic Violence	17
5. Victims of Domestic Violence	20
6. Children Suffering in Silence	23
7. Impact of Violence on the Children, if Exposed	26
8. Signs that a Child is Living with Violence	29
9. Difficulties and Problems at School	32

10. Research Results in Four European Countries	35
11. Children's Drawings : Attitudes Towards Violence and Self-Image	40
12. Responding to the Challenging Behaviour of Affected Children	43
13. Supportive Practices that Can Be Adopted at School	47
14. Those Who Can Help	49
15. Epilogue	52
16. Select Bibliography	54



IDENTITY OF THE PROJECT VI.C.T.I.MS (2009-2011)
FUNDED BY DAPHNE III PROGRAMME

Victimizing Children Through Injuring MotherS

The project VI.C.T.I.MS was designed and conducted in four countries (Cyprus, Italy, Romania, Slovakia) with funding obtained by the European programme DAPHNE III (action grants 2007-2013), and elaborated on the background of the effects of violence against women-mothers upon their children if exposed, and on how these may be externalized in different contexts such as the school environment.

PROJECT IDENTITY

“An Indirect Harmful Effect of Violence: Victimizing the Child and Re-victimizing the Woman-Mother Through her Child’s Exposure to Violence Against Herself”.

Sensitizing and creating awareness through research-product material, both transnational and differential according to the partner-context.

PROJECT AIM

- a) To examine the indirect harmful effect of violence against women mothers upon their children if exposed to it in the domestic sphere, as well as mothers’ consciousness of that effect;
- b) To sensitize all groups of people who are involved in the child’s development and education by producing awareness raising and research based material.

PROJECT'S MAIN RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- a) Are there any differences between primary-school age children who are exposed to violence against their mother and children who are not exposed, with regard to their behaviour while being exposed to violence and or while witnessing violence? Do they adopt a violent or passive behaviour?
- b) Are there any differences between primary-school age children exposed to violence against their mother, and children not exposed, with regard to their views about their self-image and their school performance?
- c) Are there any differences between primary-school age children exposed to violence against their mother, and children not exposed, with regard to their views about their mother as a role model?

REACHING THE AIM...

- a) By examining the mothers' awareness of the indirect harmful effect of violence inflicted upon the mothers on their children if exposed to it.
 - Analysis of written testimonies given by women and children, victims of violence;
 - Semi-structured interviews with women-mothers victims of violence.

- b) By investigating the possible indirect harmful effect of exposure to violence on children and comparison of their perceptions and self-images with those of children who are not exposed to violence against their mother.
- Child's self-evaluation (administration of the Self Perception Profile Test, Harter, 1985);
 - Child's evaluation by a teacher;
 - Child's perceptions on violence, self-image, school performance and mother as a role model (administration of a questionnaire with 14 scenarios-vignettes becoming filters through which children's perceptions could be examined).



An example of a scenario given to children...

It's break time. Anna sits alone in the school yard eating her snack. Some kids, her classmates, approach her without Anna noticing their presence. They are frightening her with a sudden noise and push her. Anna automatically stands up.

The question...

What would you do if you were in Anna's place?



Answers from children exposed to violence against their mother...

"I would kick them to go away"

"I would be so mad that I would start damaging things"

"I would be so mad that I would beat them badly"



CONSIDERING THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SUBJECT

Children exposed to violence...

Children witnessing violence by seeing, hearing, feeling or being aware of the violence that the one parent – usually the mother – suffers by the other parent – usually the father. “Children witnessing violence” or “children living with violence” are also used as terms.



The term of “*children witnessing violence*” may imply a passive role... Instead “*children living with violence*” means/implies that children are “actively” involved, since they can interpret what they see or hear, they can feel the pain experienced by their mothers, they can get anxious about the consequences of violence and can even start blaming themselves for causing the violence...

IT IS IMPORTANT FOR TEACHERS TO KNOW BECAUSE:

- ▶ Witnessing violence is harmful for primary-school age children, even if the children are not hurt by the violence themselves.
- ▶ The signs/effects of a child's exposure to violence may be externalized in the school environment.
- ▶ Primary-school age children witnessing violence against their mothers tend to have increased adjustment problems at school.
- ▶ Primary-school age children witnessing violence against their mothers tend to have increased behavioral and emotional problems.
- ▶ Teachers can support children exposed to violence and adopt appropriate practices dealing with those children's challenging behaviours at school.





CHILDREN EXPOSED TO VIOLENCE AGAINST THEIR MOTHER. COMMON MISTAKES FROM SCHOOL REALITY

CHILDREN EXPOSED TO VIOLENCE AGAINST THEIR MOTHER. COMMON MISTAKES FROM SCHOOL REALITY

“Something isn’t ‘right’ with these children. As a teacher, I cannot be sure what it is.”

- ◆ *Alex* participates in a fight with two other children. The odd thing is that Alex is beaten by the other two without making any effort to beat them back or defend himself.
- ◆ *Maria* is isolated and avoids being close to other kids during breaks. She prefers being by herself without talking to anyone.
- ◆ Whenever *Dan* walks in the school corridors, the younger pupils hurry to avoid him and hide from him because he always claims their food and money and sometimes even hits them.
- ◆ *Andrea* is most of the times distracted in class. She is not confident to raise her hand and whenever her classmates make fun of her, she starts shouting and threatening them.

“What is wrong with them?”

Alex's parents fight almost every day. Alex sees his dad getting hot-tempered and cries. His mother tries to calm him by saying to him “don't be afraid, mom and dad are just playing”.

Maria's mother is taking pills for depression. Maria understands that her father neglects her mother and does not show her affection and love; he only cares about his job.

Dan's father usually gets drunk due to the economic problems he faces. He cannot control his nerves and usually beats his wife. Dan witnesses all this.

Andrea's parents quarrel a lot. Andrea has to listen to her father threatening her mother that he will kick her out of the house, if she keeps going to work.

Can you appreciate and recognise the emotional or psychological pain these children are going through?

Can you find something common in the above situations?



Exposure to Domestic Violence



DEFINING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic Violence...

- ▶ is spread worldwide and can occur in all kind of social groups disregarding age, racial, socioeconomic, religious, educational and occupational differences and factors.
- ▶ is considered to be a human rights violation and a humiliation of human dignity.
- ▶ refers to an abusive relationship between a perpetrator (*abusive partner, batterer*) who causes the violence and a victim (*abused partner*).
- ▶ involves the perpetrator's repetitive behaviour including various forms of abuse – physical (*e.g., slapping*), emotional (*e.g., rejecting*), psychological (*e.g., threatening*), sexual (*e.g., enforcing to sexual actions*), economical (*e.g., economically exploiting*).
- ▶ refers to a violent behaviour that has been usually learned by the adult perpetrator (*e.g., existence of domestic violence in the family of origin*).
- ▶ is a systematic way for the perpetrators to demonstrate power and dominant behaviour over the victims.
- ▶ mostly results in the victim's survivor behaviour focused only on ensuring survival and not on leaving from the abusive relationship.

- ▶ makes the victim's attitude to be mainly determined by the discourses of powerlessness, of tolerance, of denying, of blaming self and of compassion.
- ▶ means either an injury (*e.g., from being hit, punched, slapped or from other trauma*) or stress (*e.g., from threats, humiliations, rejection or from other emotional and/or psychological cause*).
- ▶ has direct (*e.g., physical pain*) or indirect impact (*e.g., depression*) on the victims who can be either directly or indirectly hurt.

A woman's victim words...

"...violence is like they are trying to make you fall apart so as to feel powerless..."

Another's woman victim words...

"...I was trying not to provoke him... I used to believe that if I kept him calm, he wouldn't use violence again. This is the first step for making yourself a victim. Then, he keeps telling you that he is sorry and you unfortunately believe him... you have the need to do so..."



VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Victims...

- ▶ **suffer** the violence caused by the perpetrator.
- ▶ **feel unsafe** and insecure in their living environment.
- ▶ **are afraid** to react in any way (*e.g., talk to someone or testify against the perpetrator*).
- ▶ **adopt** mostly a **survival behaviour** and do not leave the abusive relationship.
- ▶ **suffer** either direct (*e.g., physical pain*) or indirect effects (*e.g., depression*).

Most of the times, victims of domestic violence are:

- ✓ Women
- ✓ Children



Children may be the:

- ✓ direct victims of violence
- ✓ indirect victims of violence



Children are considered to be the indirect victims of violence, if they are exposed to the violence that the one parent figure – usually the mother – suffers by the other parent figure - usually the father.

Being exposed to violence is still harmful for primary-school age children since, even if they are not hurt themselves, they can see, hear, feel or imagine the wrong which is inflicted on their mothers, and this makes them feel unsafe.

A woman's victim words...

"...violence is like you are killing firstly yourself and then the others around you..."



CHILDREN SUFFERING IN SILENCE

A mother's truth...

“...I made my daughter suffer a lot with my tolerant behaviour.. But, when you are hurt and you are suffering, you cannot realize that you are hurting the others around you... that your children are suffering too...”

MOTHERS' CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE INDIRECT IMPACT OF VIOLENCE UPON CHILDREN IF EXPOSED

- ♦ *“...I could see that my daughter did not smile. She totally withdrew into herself, she didn't want to make friends at school and during breaks she preferred to be alone...”*
- ♦ *“...children are not in the room where we fight...sometimes they are in their own room. They are just sitting in their room scared but still, they continue their studying...”*
- ♦ *“... due to this violent situation at home, my daughters came very close to each other. At school, during breaks the younger one is always looking for her sister...”*
- ♦ *“...my son is very active at school and usually his teachers complain about his violent behaviour. His school performance is also low... He doesn't care at all about his lessons...”*

- ◆ *“...her teacher said to me that she is very often distracted at class. I can understand this because at home also, she cannot study by herself, she cannot concentrate... She needs me to be by her side all the time so as to feel safe and when I leave she keeps asking for me...”*
- ◆ *“...whereas at home my kids were very active, when I went to their school to ask the teachers about their school performance and behaviour, they kept telling me that my children were too shy to participate in any school activity...”*



Domestic violence – violence against women victimizes not only the women mothers but also their children, even if children are not themselves the target of violence and women are assaulted instead.

This occurs because most of the time the children are at home during the violence incidents and are in many ways witnesses to the violence.



IMPACT OF VIOLENCE ON THE CHILDREN, IF EXPOSED

IMPACT OF VIOLENCE ON THE CHILDREN, IF EXPOSED

Witnessing violence against their mothers makes children feel afraid and unsafe.

Children's exposure to violence against their mothers is tantamount to psychological maltreatment and victimization, and differs according to the children's age, gender and type of exposure.

- ✓ **Children exposed to violence often experience either short- or long-term impact that may also affect also their adjustment at school.**

Children exposed to violence against their mothers may ...

- ♦ choose to react aggressively in an ordinary situation
 - either verbally (e.g., *insulting their classmates while playing*).
 - or physically (e.g., *hitting their classmates while playing*).
- ♦ choose to react aggressively when exposed directly to violence
 - either verbally (e.g., *threatening and insulting while been pushed*).
 - or physically (e.g., *push while being pushed*).
- ♦ choose to react aggressively while witnessing violence (e.g., *interfering in a fight*).



Exposure to violence may desensitize children to aggressiveness. When this happens, aggressive behaviour becomes part of the “norm” and is more likely to be adopted.

- ◆ choose to adopt a passive behaviour
 - while exposed directly to violence (*e.g., stay silent while being threatened*).
 - while witnessing violence (*e.g., ignoring a fight*).
- ◆ have a low self-esteem and an inferior self-image.
- ◆ not be happy with the way they lead their life.
- ◆ feel less accepted by their peers and less popular among classmates and/or friends.
- ◆ not be happy with the way they look and feel that they are not so good-looking.

- ◆ reject their mother as a role model.
- ◆ feel more intensely the need to protect their mother.

- ◆ have a low school performance.
- ◆ have problems of concentrating in class and dealing with their school obligations (*e.g., homework*).
- ◆ display traumatic stress reactions (*e.g., sleep disturbances, constant fear of possible danger*).



SIGNS THAT A CHILD IS LIVING WITH VIOLENCE

SIGNS THAT A CHILD IS LIVING WITH VIOLENCE

The signs/effects of a child's exposure to violence are as varied as children's personalities and may be externalized in different ways in the school environment. Some are the following:

Have in mind

-
- ❖ **Some signs may seem completely unrelated to the child's exposure to violence.**
 - ❖ **Still, children displaying these signs *may not* have been necessarily exposed to domestic violence.**
-

Signs...

- ♦ **Increased aggressive behaviours and feelings of anger.**
(physically or verbally assaulting peers, i.e., hitting, pushing, kicking, insulting, embarrassing, using violent wording, threatening).
- ♦ **Increased passive behaviours and apathy.**
(i.e., not reacting in any way while exposed to violence or witnessing violence, stay silent while being threatened or embarrassed).
- ♦ **Diminished self-esteem and self-confidence.**
(i.e., lack of confidence to raise hand in class, lack of confidence to participate in school activities or festivals).

- ◆ **Withdrawal from peers - classmates, teachers, friends.**
(i.e., being isolated during breaks).
- ◆ **Lack of interest in school activities.**
- ◆ **Unreasonable and excessive worry about the safety of loved ones.**
(i.e., asking constantly about mother, needing to be near siblings during the school day).
- ◆ **Difficulty completing an activity or task.**
(i.e., having trouble with schoolwork).
- ◆ **Low school performance.**
(i.e., apparent loss of previously learned skills, trouble concentrating).
- ◆ **Constant worry about possible danger.**





DIFFICULTIES AND PROBLEMS AT SCHOOL

DIFFICULTIES AND PROBLEMS AT SCHOOL

Primary-school age children exposed to violence against their mother may display various difficulties and problems in their school adjustment.

TEACHERS' NARRATIONS ABOUT ...

Victims – Primary-school age students identified to have been exposed to violence...

- ♦ *“...The child is usually absent from school and some days he comes late at school. He seems tired and inexplicably scared and sad, I could say...”*
- ♦ *“...He is very undisciplined and disrespectful to his teachers... He keeps taking pride in the fact that he is hitting his younger sister...”*
- ♦ *“...Completing a task or homework seems to be boring for her... She cannot concentrate, whatever motives I try to give her...She is always so low –profile and shy...”*
- ♦ *“...He tries very hard to be a good student... I can sense his need to make his mother feel proud of him... Although he is trying so hard, he feels that whatever he does is wrong or not good enough...”*

A problem in the domestic sphere, such as domestic violence and children's exposure to it, becomes automatically a social one; this means that it can consequently affect the whole social environment in which the victims socialize and become socialized.

◆ **Behavioral Problems/ Difficulties**

- Adoption of aggressive behaviours (e.g., using violent wording, physically hurting self and others).
- Adoption of passive behaviours and demonstrating apathy.
- Expression of negative feelings (e.g., anger, anxiety, testiness).
- Involvement in fights, easily getting into trouble and being undisciplined and rebellious.
- Lack of respect for peers – classmates, teachers.
- Rejecting school and school teachers.

◆ **Emotional Problems/ Difficulties**

- Feeling lonely, not accepted and not respected by peers – classmates, friends, teachers.
- Demonstrating an excessive worry about the safety of loved ones.
- Feeling sad and unsafe at school.
- Inability to express feelings of joy and gladness.
- Lack of self-confidence – feeling incapable of doing something right.



RESEARCH RESULTS IN FOUR EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

The findings and results of the Project VI.C.T.I.MS are the following:

- (a) Children exposed to violence against their mothers tend to engage in more aggressive reactions than what is expected in an ordinary situation, while they are being exposed to violence and while witnessing violence. Boys are those who tend to be more aggressive and externalize in a more intense way their feelings of anger.
- (b) Children exposed to violence against their mothers also tend to adopt a more passive behaviour in an ordinary situation and while witnessing violence. Girls are those who tend to be more passive and who do not externalize their feelings.
- (c) Children exposed to violence against their mothers tend to have lower levels of self-esteem and an inferior self-image. They feel less accepted by peers and less popular among significant others – classmates, friends.
- (d) Children exposed to violence against their mothers tend to be less happy with the way they are leading their lives.
- (e) Children exposed to violence against their mothers tend to believe that they are not so good students. They tend to believe that they have a poor school performance and evaluate themselves as failures.

Primary-school age children learn how to behave in their future relationships from what they have experienced as children in their family. If they were exposed to violence, then the possibility of doing the same - taking either the role of victim or perpetrator - in the future increases.

An example of a scenario given to children...

Josef is a boy / Melina is a girl who is exactly your age. While playing with neighborhood children, one child tripped Josef/Melina on purpose. He/she fell down on his/her back. Since he/she did not expect it, he/she was quite hurt. The others, led by that child, began to laugh because he/she fell down in a funny way.

The question...

How would you act if you were in Josef's or Melina's place?



Answers from children exposed to violence against their mother...

"I would trip the child who hurt me so as to break his head"

"I would hit the one that made me fall down"

"I wouldn't do anything"

Another example of a scenario given to children...

Chara has a big test tomorrow and tries to study. But her younger brother and sister are playing noisily in the other room. Chara asks them to stop being noisy, but they go on doing it, shouting even louder.

The question...

What would you do if you were in Chara's place?



Answers from children exposed to violence against their mother..

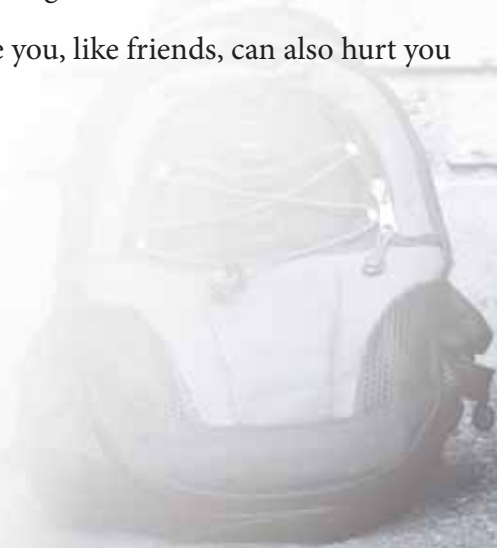
“I would start screaming and threatening to hit them”

“I would yell at them and hit them”

“I would start crying and I don't think I could do something”

LESSONS THAT CHILDREN EXPOSED TO VIOLENCE MAY LEARN

- ◆ Violence can be countered by violence
- ◆ Violence is the best way to solve a problem
- ◆ It is better not to react while being exposed to violence in order not to have trouble
- ◆ Violence can be countered by passive behaviour
- ◆ Violence and threats make you feel smarter and more powerful
- ◆ Negative feelings such as anger can lead to violence
- ◆ People you love and love you, like friends, can also hurt you





CHILDREN'S DRAWINGS: ATTITUDES TOWARDS VIOLENCE AND SELF-IMAGE

Scenario

Demetris' mother went to school during break to talk with the teacher and saw Demetris participating in a fight with two other children. The weird was that Demetris was beaten by the other two without making any effort to beat them back or defend himself.

The Question

What would you do if Demetris was your younger brother?



Girl - 5th Grade



Boy - 5th Grade



Boy - 5th Grade

Scenario

Some money, which were intended for a school trip got lost from the classroom. Helen is wrongly accused for stealing the money, but she did not do it.

The Question

What would you do if you were in Helen's place?



Boy - 5th Grade



Boy - 5th Grade



Girl - 5th Grade



RESPONDING TO CHALLENGING BEHAVIOURS OF AFFECTED CHILDREN

RESPONDING TO THE CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR OF AFFECTED CHILDREN

Teachers can help students exposed to violence against their mothers in many ways at school.

☛ *An important presupposition though is for teachers to be aware of what the domestic violence is about and on the way children's exposure to it can affect their behaviour at school.*

SOME MISTAKES...

Teachers may

- become empathetic towards these children and overestimate their abilities.
- underestimate their scholastic competence/ abilities.
- have lower expectations from these children.
- punish them when they are getting into trouble.
- isolate them because of their aggressive behaviour.
- make hateful or angry comments concerning those children's scholastic competence or behaviour.
- judge these children's parents and family situation badly.

Guidelines below may help you to respond to students' challenging behaviours regardless of whether exposure to domestic violence is involved.

DOING RIGHT...

Teachers should

✓ In case of behavioral problems / difficulties

- give them examples on how to behave in an assertive way and on how to choose constructive solutions instead of an aggressive reaction.
- give them a clear picture of what behaviours are considered “right” or “not right” during an activity or during playing.
- reward each student’s assertive behaviour and avoid strict punishments.
- make a plan for how they can respond to violence (i.e., calling for a teacher to come).
- help them find a secure place they can go when they feel “threatened” (i.e., library).
- do not judge them harshly. Listen to their story, to what they have to say about a bad behaviour they have exhibited.
- be prepared to listen to their stories. Their stories may make you feel sad, angry or shocked. While these feelings are normal, it is not good to share them directly with the children.
- differentiate teaching accordingly, so as to help these students participate in class.

- give them space to recall and use previously learned skills.
- teach them conflict resolution skills (i.e., learning to listen to the other's point of view/ argument and learning to express their feelings rather than adopting physically or verbally aggressive behaviors).

✓ *In case of emotional problems / difficulties*

- provide a healthy and loving environment for students.
- have these children near you. Do not force them to make friends or engage in an activity.
- motivate group working so as to cultivate students' sense of belonging to a team.
- do not make hateful or angry comments.
- do not judge them harshly. Listen to what they have to say about an emotional outburst they had.
- help them express their feelings, negative or positive, either by talking or playing.
- engage them in joyful and positive activities.
- give them motives to participate in school activities such as school festivals.
- establish simple rules and routines so that children know what to expect.

All the above cannot erase all the emotional and psychological pain a child exposed to violence is going through. Furthermore, despite the fact that children at school learn behaviors and skills, this learning is always filtered through their experiences at home. Therefore, teachers' interventions may only counterbalance those negative effects of a child's exposure to violence that are externalized in the school environment.



SUPPORTIVE PRACTICES THAT CAN BE ADOPTED AT SCHOOL

Supportive practices that can be adopted at school are the following:

☛ **These supportive practices can be integrated in the Curriculum as special topics, but it is left on teachers to decide how these can be transferred from theory to praxis in the school environment.**

- a) Educating children on right and wrong behaviour through all school subjects (cultivating the need of adopting assertive behaviour – constructive solutions).
- b) Using positive discipline that teaches children and choosing not to spank or engage in physical corporal punishment.
- c) Educating children on the forms of violence which can be met in all the various possible contexts (family, school, community) and its negative effects.
- d) Educating children on the role models of father and mother.
- e) Educating children on the value of relationships and on group working.
- f) Educating children on ways to express their feelings, either negative or positive.
- g) Human Rights Education.



THOSE WHO CAN HELP

Consulting, where possible, is helpful for teachers, since sometimes they may not know the right ways of helping those students identified to have been exposed to violence against their mothers.

◆ PARENTS

- Talk to them.
- Have a clear picture in your mind about which of the child's behaviours are a cause of concern before talking to the parents.
- Prefer to invite initially the child's mother to talk to you about her child's behaviour.
- Make sure that the communication is done in a safe place – preferably the school – and not by phone since this may cause problems to the mother - victim, especially if she is still suffering violence by the perpetrator.
- Make the mother feel comfortable with you and assure her that you are concerned about her child, and that you wish to help.
- Take into consideration that the mother or a parent may consider that a family problem, like domestic violence, is a private matter which does not need to be discussed at school.
- Bear in mind that the mother may reject everything you choose to tell her, but stay calm and supportive.
- Give her information on available resources for help (i.e., associations for domestic violence, women's shelters, a police office or service dealing with domestic violence, psychologists, child protection services).

- ◆ SCHOOL – PSYCHOLOGISTS (collaborating with teachers at school)
- ◆ SOCIAL WORKERS (working in GOs and NGOs dealing with the subject of domestic violence)
- ◆ POLICE OFFICERS (dealing with the subject of domestic violence)

- Talk to them.
- Take their advice on how to deal with some of the children's challenging behaviours.
- Be confidential. It is inappropriate to gossip about students and their families.
- Ask for their help in case you consider it right to fill in an official report about the child, but also bear in mind the specific legislation that may apply in your country.



EPILOGUE

EPILOGUE

As authors, we could choose to conclude with some main remarks on the effects of children's exposure to violence against their mother. Still, we considered it better to end with some women-mothers' words combined together in what turned out to be a meaningful puzzle, a puzzle which can magically help this handbook reach its aim.

"... he was violent; I mostly think that he was provoking violence, all the fights between us. Maybe I am to blame also since I wasn't reacting... I wanted to be the victim so I was... because I couldn't do anything to stop it ..."

"... children were not in the room in which we were fighting...sometimes they were in their own room. I was trying not to make them feel uncomfortable... They needed their father so I was suffering violence for the sake of my family ..."

"... but violence is like you are killing firstly yourself and then the others around you... I made my children suffer a lot... But, when you are hurt and you are suffering, you cannot realize that you are hurting the others around you... that your children are suffering too ..."

"... I could see that my children weren't acting normal. My daughter was always depressed and my son was very violent at school. Their teachers were always complaining ..."

"... for my children's sanity, I had to react and end all the violence...I had to speak to others near me and near my children to help us. I had to inform the teachers ..."

Awareness always helps.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Baker, L. L., & Cunningham, A. J. (2005). *Learning to listen. Learning to help. Understanding woman abuse and its effects on children*. London, ON: Centre for Children & Families in the Justice System.
- Baker, L. L., & Jaffe, P. G. (2007). *Woman abuse affects our children. An educator's guide*. Ontario: Queen's Printer.
- Baker, L. L., Jaffe, P. G., & Ashbourne, L. (2002). *Children exposed to domestic violence. An early childhood educator's handbook to increase understanding and improve community responses*. London, ON: Centre for Children & Families in the Justice System.
- Baker, L. L., Jaffe, P. G., & Ashbourne, L. (2002). *Children exposed to domestic violence. A teacher's handbook to increase understanding and improve community responses*. London, ON: Centre for Children & Families in the Justice System.
- Fantuzzo, J., & Fusco, R. (2007). Children's direct sensory exposure to substantiated domestic violence crimes. *Violence and Victims*, 22(2), 158-172.
- Fantuzzo, J., & Mohr, W. K. (1999). Prevalence and effects of child exposure to domestic violence. *The Future of Children*, 9(3), 21-32.
- Holden, G. W. (2003). Children exposed to domestic violence and child abuse: Terminology and taxonomy. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, 6(3), 151-160.
- Holder, R., Kelly, L., & Singh, T. (1994). *Suffering in silence: Children and young people who witness domestic violence*. London: Hammersmith and Fulham Domestic Violence Forum.

- Kitzman, K. M., Gaylord, N. K., Holt, A. R., & Kenny, E. D. (2003). Child witnesses to domestic violence: A meta-analytic review. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 71*(2), 339-352.
- Koutselini, M., & Valanidou, Fl. (2011). Woman's attitude as a victim of violence: Extending or narrowing the gender gap? In M. Koutselini & S. Agathangelou (Eds.), *Proceedings of the International Conference "Mapping the Gender Equality: Research and practices – The national and International Perspective"* (pp. 29-44). Nicosia, Cyprus: University of Cyprus, UNESCO Chair in Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment.
- Landsman, M. J., & Copps-Hartley C. (2001). Attributing responsibility for child maltreatment when domestic violence is present. *Child Abuse and Neglect, 31*, 445-461.
- McGuigan, W. M., & Pratt C. C. (2001). The predictive impact of domestic violence on three types of child maltreatment. *Child Abuse and Neglect, 25*, 869-883.
- Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. (2009). *Healing the invisible wounds: Children's exposure to violence. A guide for families*. North Bethesda: Safe Start Center Publications.
- O'Hagan, K. (1993). *Emotional and psychological abuse of children*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Osofsky, J. (1995). Children who witness domestic violence: The invisible victims. *Social Policy Report, Society for Research in Child Development, 9*(3), 1-16.
- Osofsky, J. (1999). The impact of violence on children. *Domestic Violence and Children, 9*(3), 33-49.
- Øverlien, C. (2010). Children exposed to domestic violence. Conclusions from the literature and challenges ahead. *Journal of Social Work, 10*(1), 80-97.
- Sterne, A., & Poole, L. (2009). *Domestic violence and children: A handbook for schools and early years settings*. New York: Routledge.

The views, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position or policies of the European Commission - Daphne III Programme

