
VICTIM EYES

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Domestic Violence and Children

Melissa D. Stankavich

Victim and Witness Assistance

In the 1960's, the maltreatment of children was addressed as a social problem. In the 1970's, there emerged an acknowledgement regarding the problem of women being abuse. However, much of the focus was on either the maltreatment of child or the abuse of women. There were very few efforts focused on the co-existence of both. For example:

A victim of domestic violence is being interviewed while her eight-year-old son is with her. After twenty minutes of waiting for the interview to be completed, the child in a fit of rage screams at his mother and thrashed-out at her.

There are many theories that have been developed to explain domestic violence, one such theory addresses learned behavior. According to this theory, all human social behaviors are behaviors learned through personal

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The Man –

Charles R. Hofheimer

Melissa D. Stankavich

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Charles R. Hofheimer has achieved many accomplishments throughout his life. In 1969, Hofheimer received his Bachelors of Arts from Old Dominion University, and his J.D. in 1972 at Washington and Lee University, where he was President of the Washington and Lee Student Bar Association. He has served on the General Counsel for the Democratic Party of Virginia, and is currently a member of the Hampton Roads Family Law Organization in Virginia Beach, Virginia. Hofheimer also is a member of the Virginia and American Bar Associations, Virginia State Bar and Association of Trial Lawyers of America the Family Law Section; along with the Virginia Trial Lawyers Association. Hofheimer and his firm specialize in Family Law, and is recognized as one of the best-known divorce lawyers in the Hampton Roads area. He is a trained mediator, whose expertise and particular emphasis on custody and property issues.

When he is not in court, Hofheimer, with the assistance of Daryl B. Nemo, Program Director of 2nd Saturdays, educate women throughout the Tidewater area about taking care of their needs during a divorce for the past nine years. The goal is to empower women with knowledge and support as they ponder through their divorce. Hofheimer, along with a group of experts on legal, financial, and psychological aspects of divorce spend three hours twice a month holding

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experience or exposure. In the case of domestic violence, this is a result of some individuals learning that it is expectable to be violent or to use violence in certain setting, and other individuals learning to accept or tolerate violence. This learning primarily takes place within the family, which results in an intergenerational cycle of violence.

Domestic violence has serious physical, psychological, financial and social consequences. These threats on an individuals security and confidence, in addition to, the increase of aggressive behavior demonstrated by children who are chronically exposed to violence is difficult to image.

Some examples of immediate behavioral problem that maybe exhibited during infancies are fretful sleep, developmental slowness, lethargy and fearful reactions to a loud voice. Toddlers may exhibit frequent illnesses, severe shyness, low self-esteem, hitting, biting and trouble in preschool. In school age children frequent illness, hitting, stealing, lying, nightmares, eating problems, repetitive self-harm, poor school performance, perfectionist behavior and substance abuse are some of the common symptoms. Moreover, the oldest child is most often the caretaker with these homes.

In a study entitled *When Children Witness Domestic Violence*, Yates found a majority of children who grow-up in violence homes may exhibit behavioral disorders, such as those indicated above, and others may suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, grief reactions and separations anxiety.

Unfortunately, the wounds of children who witness violence or are themselves victims of maltreatment are easily overlooked unless directly abused. It is estimated that 3.3 million to 10 million children witness physical assault between their parents, and between 45% and 70% of children exposed to domestic violence are also victims of physical abuse, in addition, these same children are also at greater risk of sexual abuse. Moreover, a Massachusetts study found that the children within these same households are six times more likely to commit suicide, and 60 times more likely to be involved in delinquent behavior.

Domestic Violence can occur in all social economic groups, however, research has suggested that factors such as history of violence, income, educational

Dear Teddy,

Teddy, I've been bad again,
My Mommy told me so;
I'm not quite sure what I did wrong,
But I thought that you might know.
When I woke up this morning,
I knew that she was mad;
Cause she was crying awful hard,
And yelling at my dad.
I tried my best to be real good,
And do just what she said;
I cleaned my room all by myself,
I even made my bed.
But I spilled milk on my good shirt,
When she yelled at me to hurry;
And I guess she didn't hear me,
When I told her I was sorry.
Cause she hit me awful hard, you see,
And called me funny names;
And told me I was really bad,
And I should be ashamed!
When I said, "I love you, Mommy,"
I guess she didn't understand;
Cause she yelled at me to shut my mouth.
Or I'd get smacked again.
So I came up here to talk to you,
Please tell me what to do;
Cause I really love my mommy,
And I know she loves me, too.
And I don't think my mommy means,
To hit me quite so hard;
I guess sometimes, grown ups forget.
How really big they are!
So Teddy, I wish you were real,
And you weren't just a bear;
Then you could help me find a way.
To tell Mommies every where.
To please try hard to understand.
How sad it makes us feel;
*Cause the outside pain soon goes a way,
But the inside never heals!
And if we could make them listen,
Maybe then they'd understand;
So other children just like me,
Wouldn't have to hurt again.
But for now, I guess I'll hold you tight,
And pretend the pain's not there;
I know you'd never hurt me,
So Goodnight, Teddy Bear!*

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SAFETY PROJECT

The Domestic Violence Safety Project provide victims of domestic violence with an attorney to assist in civil motion practice involving custody, support, and protective orders. The attorneys who participate in this project will receive CLE Credits for their participation in trainings', and in turn the attorneys agree to take two or three cases for victims of domestic violence. This project was started in Portsmouth and now includes Chesapeake. If anyone is interested in learning more about or starting a Domestic Violence Safety Project in their locality, please contact Melissa Stankavich at (757) 357-7403.Ψ

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background, and the presence of substance abuse increases the risk of violence.

In 32 states fatality review committees have investigated the deaths of children who have been reported to or involved with child protective services. Between 1990 and 1993, the New York City Child Welfare Administration Fatality Review Panel reported that in 39.8% of the child deaths investigated, the mother was being abuse by her significant other. In addition, domestic violence was most often closely associated with child homicides opposed to accidents, suicide, natural or undetermined causes of death. The family, where child homicides occurred, was reported most of the time having had a documented history of domestic violence four years prior to the fatality.

Some states have begun to take action by filing child endangerment charge when children are present during domestic violence incidents and caught in the crossfire. The State of California, Court of Appeals has upheld the removal of twin daughters from an abuser's home as a result of witnessing domestic violence.

Although there is strong evidence that children who witness domestic violence experience emotional and behavioral difficulties. This complex issue raises many questions pertaining to how professional should intervene on the behalf of the children in homes where there is domestic violence. Further research in this area need to be done.ψ

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seminars on "What Women Need to Know About Divorce."

These seminars address many specific issues concerning women and divorce, such as the effects of divorce on women and children, and what to expect and how to prepare for meetings with attorneys and other professionals. The seminars are available to assist women through the whole process; whether they are confronting divorce or simply wanting to know their rights.

In addition to 2nd Saturdays, Hofheimer has spoken to groups regarding women's issues. On February 18, 2000, Hofheimer gave a presentation on "Protective Orders and Custody Issues" to professionals within the Fifth District. This presentation provided professional from many diverse models of thought an opportunity to inquire about protective orders and custody issues as it pertains to domestic violence. Ψ

I Never Knew

I never knew how bad it was;
I heard it did exist.
I was appalled at this crime
That robbed youth
Of their "special" time.
I never knew how bad it hurt;
The bruises and scars aren't seen.
And why somewhere along life's way,
The brutality of abuse
Hs made you pay.
I never knew how you felt;
Your self-esteem so low.
I only knew you crept away,
And never let your feeling show.
In ever knew what I could do;
That I could help somehow.
That all you needed was a friend.
Just someone to be your pal.
But now I know that I can help.
I can make a difference, too.
I'll stand with you; I'll shout with you,
And the rest can't say, "I NEVER KNEW."
A CHILD CALLED "IT"
- Cindy M. Adams

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Source:

Child Abuse Center
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The Facts:

Each year in the U.S. there are approximately 50,000 homicides and suicides; 20,000 are homicides. A substantial number of these homicides occur when children are present, because these homicides often involve family or friend.

Of special concern are recent indications that children are being exposed to severe and chronic violence at younger ages. First and second graders have reported witnessing high levels of violence by the times they enter elementary school.

The impact of violence on children depends on: the level of exposure; the child's age and developmental phase; the family and community context in which the violence occurred; and the availability of family and community supports.

In a national survey of over 6,000 American families, 50% of the men who frequently assaulted their wives also frequently abused their children.

Child abuse is 15 times more likely to occur in families where domestic violence is present.

Men who have witnessed their parents' domestic violence are three times more likely to abuse their own wives than children of non-violent parents, with the sons of the most violent parents being 1000 times more likely to become wife beaters.

Children who witness violence at home display emotional and behavioral disturbances as diverse as withdrawal, low self-esteem, nightmares, self-blame, and aggression against peers, family members and property.

A comparison of delinquent and non-delinquent youth found that a history of family violence or abuse is the most significant difference between the two groups.

Over three million children are at risk of exposure to parental violence each year.

