
Helping Children Who Witness Domestic Violence:A Guide for Parents (Instructor's Manual)

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Helping Kids Who Witness DV: Review 120

Author's Notes

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Note to Instructors

The Curriculum

The purpose of the curriculum is to help parents who have experienced domestic violence to understand the impact on their children and themselves; to teach parents to talk to and listen to their children about their experience of the violence; to encourage children's resiliency, and to support parents in strengthening their relationships with their children.

The curriculum is designed for use by instructors and counselors in parent education classes, DV shelter programs, batterers' treatment programs, and other related counseling programs. If you are unable to teach the entire curriculum, the authors recommend that you always include the first two sessions. (What is *Domestic Violence* and *Effects of DV on Kids*).

The focus of the curriculum is domestic violence and parenting issues. This is **nota** curriculum for a comprehensive parent skills class. Parents participating in your program may have several other needs that are not met by this curriculum. These might include needs for safety planning and shelter, perpetrator treatment, parenting skills, etc. Instructors can use the resource list at the back of the curriculum to find other resources.

Many parenting classes include parents from a variety of backgrounds. In your class, you may have immigrant and refugee parents, parents whose religion, culture, or sexual orientation may be different from your own, as well as parents who are not literate.

When teaching the curriculum, it is important to acknowledge the individual beliefs and experiences each parent has, that may affect his or her understanding of the material in this curriculum. By opening up a discussion of these individual beliefs and experiences at the first session, you can help parents to integrate these new materials with some of their current knowledge and strengths as parents. Encourage parents to discuss their own beliefs and experiences throughout the class. If you have parents who are not literate or have limited literacy skills, tailor your use of the curriculum to their needs, by limiting the written exercises and homework.

Structure of the Curriculum

The curriculum contains twelve sessions. *Please note*: there are two versions each of Session 5 and Session 6; one for victims and one for perpetrators of domestic violence. These are appropriate for use in specialized DV programs. If you are teaching a parent education class, you may choose to skip these sessions. Each session includes learning Objectives and a Lesson Plan, and detailed notes and guidelines for the instructor. Most sessions include brief stories to illustrate key points. The curriculum includes an instructor manual and a student manual.

Assumptions of Curriculum

The curriculum is based on the following assumptions:

- Children who experience domestic violence in their families are victims of domestic violence, even when they don't physically witness the violence.
- Domestic violence is a pattern of coercive behavior that one person uses to maintain control over his or her partner. It is not caused by anger, stress, drugs or alcohol, the behavior of the victim, or other external forces.
- Domestic violence is always the responsibility of the perpetrator.
- There is never any circumstance when it is justifiable for a person to use violence against their partner.
- Perpetrators and victims of DV come from all cultural, socio-economic, religious and educational backgrounds. There is not one "type" of person who is a perpetrator or victim of DV.
- Corporal punishment is not an acceptable form of punishment for children who have witnessed domestic violence.
- The role of the instructor is to model respectful behavior in the class. Every participant in the class should be treated with respect, regardless of his or her behavior in the class.
- Each person has their own beliefs and experiences about parenting. These need to be acknowledged and discussed when they come up during classes.

We ask that every person using this curriculum feel comfortable with these assumptions.

Responding to Perpetrators and Victims of DV in Your Class

Domestic violence is an extremely difficult topic for some participants. In every coeducational parenting class there are likely to be both perpetrators and victims of domestic violence.

DO NOT get into arguments about the definition of domestic violence. Allow some discussion. If people don't agree with the definitions provided here, acknowledge that they have a different definition, but the definition provided in the curriculum is the one that will be used in the class.

DO NOT try to provide individual counselling to anyone during the class. If a person is in crisis, or has an urgent need to talk to someone about domestic violence that is currently going on in their relationship, refer them to a specialized program for perpetrators or victims of DV in your community. (See the resource list at the back of this manual). **Note: Please do not refer couples who are currently experiencing DV to couples' or family counseling.** Perpetrators of domestic violence often use couples' or family counseling as a way to further intimidate and control their partners and/or children.

Introduction

Instructor: Introduce yourself. Give students your name, phone number and when you can be reached. Welcome participants.

Tell Class: Please share something about yourself as a parent. We would like to hear something about your children as well, so that we can all know a little about each others' families.

Write on the board:

- Your name
- The names and ages of each of your children
- One thing you enjoy about being with your children
- One of your best qualities as a parent
- One thing you want to learn or work on in this class

What Has Impacted My Parenting

Tell Class: Every parent has their own set of experiences that teaches us about our role as a parent, and how we should interact with our children. Before we start on the content of this curriculum, we're going to take some time to look at what experiences have influenced each of us as parents. We would like to continue this discussion throughout the class sessions.

Take a few minutes to think of what these influences were for you. Some examples are:

- Your own family including parents and grandparents, aunts and uncles and others,
- Your culture,
- Your ethnic background,
- The culture in which your children are being raised, if different from your own,
- Your religion,

- Your spouse or partner's background,
- Your experience in your relationship with the father or mother of your child,
- The community where you currently live with your family,
- Your income level, immigration status, and other factors that affect your life.

Take some time to discuss these with the class. If people are having a hard time getting started, you can begin with some examples, or by sharing some of your own experiences. Then ask class: What contributes to your strengths as a parent? What things about your parenting would you like to change?

Purpose of the Class

- To understand the effects of domestic violence on children
- To learn ways to talk to and listen to them about their experience of domestic violence
- To understand how domestic violence affects you as a parent
- To work on safe, nonviolent relationships with your child's father or mother
- To learn and practice new problem-solving techniques with children
- To find support and counseling for you and your children, if needed

During this class we will be talking about some things that can be difficult, sad, or upsetting. If you want referrals to places to get help or support for domestic violence related issues, please ask the instructor.

Rules

1. All information about class participants is CONFIDENTIAL. You are welcome to share your own experiences and knowledge from the class with friends and family members, but do not discuss your classmates' experiences or mention their names.
2. Speak respectfully to everyone you interact with in the program, including fellow classmates, instructors, and support staff.
3. Please give your full attention to whoever is talking. Do not interrupt people who are talking, or start private conversations with other participants.
4. Bring your workbook and a pen or pencil to each class.

We want this class to be as helpful to you as possible. Please ask questions, and let us know how we can make it more useful for you. If you have trouble understanding anything that's being taught, or have difficulty reading or writing, please let the instructor know.

Session 1: What is Domestic Violence?

Objectives:

1. To teach the definition of domestic violence
2. To help participants understand the impact of domestic violence on parents

Lesson Plan:

- Introductions
- Goals and rules
- Definition of domestic violence (DV)
- Power and control in violent relationships
- Effects of DV on victims
- Effects of DV on perpetrators
- Homework

Introductions

Begin by telling the class: We are going to start by defining domestic violence.

Write on the board: "Domestic violence is not just hitting. It is a pattern of actions that one person uses to control or dominate his or her intimate partner through violence and the threat of violence."

I am going to read a story from a man who was violent to his wife. As I read it, listen for the different things the abusive person is doing. We will make a list of them afterwards.

John's Story

John completed a domestic violence treatment program. His actions are very typical for a person who is abusing his wife or partner. This is how he described his violent/abusive behavior.

One night, it was just before Christmas, I went out Christmas shopping for my family. I had \$400 on me. I spent \$300 on presents, and then I went to a bar and spent \$100 on drinks for me and my friends. I took a cab home and forgot to take the gifts with me. The driver took off with all the

Christmas presents in the car. I went in the house and I started screaming at Suzanne. I told her to call the taxi commission and find the driver who had the presents. It was late and she couldn't get through to the commission. I started screaming at her and telling her how stupid she was. I told her it would be her fault if the kids didn't get any Christmas gifts. My son, he was three at the time, was there and he started crying. I took some of our family pictures off the wall and threw them across the room. I threw Suzanne down on the ground. I picked up my son and shook him. Then I screamed at her, "Take your fucking kid and get out of here."

Other times I threatened to commit suicide just to scare her. I would put down her family, and tell her she was a failure, a rotten mother and a rotten wife. I told her that if she told anyone about the violence I would kill her. I would pull her hair and pinch her. I would say things to her like, "I am the king, and you are my slave." I would make her have sex when she didn't want to. Throughout our marriage, I abused her verbally on a daily basis. I beat up on her pretty bad when she was pregnant. I hit and kicked her in the legs and arms and smacked her face."

Ask the class What are some things that John did to control his wife and son?

Generate a list. Write the list on the board.

What is domestic violence?

Domestic Violence (DV) is a whole pattern of actions that one person uses to dominate and control another person through physical and sexual violence, and the ongoing threat of violence.

Who Commits DV?

A batterer is any person who uses physical violence and the threat of violence to control or limit the actions of his or her intimate partner.

A victim of domestic violence is any person who is in an intimate relationship with a batterer.

DV happens in every neighborhood, in every social class, and in every religious, racial and ethnic group. It can happen to our friends, grandparents, neighbors, coworkers and ourselves.

The majority (90%) of reported domestic violence assaults are committed by men against women. Some women assault their male partners, but in many of these cases, they are acting in self-defense. Domestic violence also occurs in gay and lesbian relationships.

Why Are People Violent to Their Partners?

People are violent to their partners because at some time in their lives, they have learned that being violent is the way to make your partner and children act the way you want them to. They believe that they have the right to be violent at home.

Men who batter are often supported in their violence by social norms that say that the man has to do whatever it takes to "be in charge," or "wear the pants." They may also be supported by family

members, friends, police, courts, doctors, counselors, pastors, and others who choose to ignore the violence when they hear about it.

Myths and Misconceptions About DV

There are many "myths" about what causes domestic violence. Some of the myths about DV are that it is caused by:

- Stress
- Alcohol or drugs
- Problems in communication
- Something the victim did
- Anger
- Jealousy
- Insecurity

The only thing that causes DV is the actions and choices of the violent person.

Review the definition of DV. Allow for some discussion, but do not allow people to argue about the causes. If people strongly disagree, ask that they accept your definition for now, and try to work with you.

Power and Control in Violent Relationships

Tell class: We define DV as a pattern of behavior that one person uses to dominate and control his or her partner. Control issues are something most people experience, not only in relationships but in many other aspects of our lives, including our jobs, our social activities and our government and legal system.

Power relationships can be thought of as a pyramid. The person or people at the top are in control, and the person or people on the bottom are relatively powerless.

A good way to understand this kind of system is to look at South Africa under apartheid. In that country, the white minority attempted to maintain complete control over the black South Africans, the East Indians, and other people of color. Many people have similar experiences in the United States.

Ask the class: How did the people in power maintain control over others?

Have class generate a list, including

- Dictating where people can live and what kind of work they can do
- Establishing curfews, and limiting travel
- Denying them education, jobs, and access to medical care
- Preventing them from voting or having any voice in political decisions
- Denying them police protection
- Denying them fair treatment in court
- Preventing people from gathering
- Limiting access to information
- Creating negative stereotypes through media

Ask class: How did those in power use violence and the threat of violence?

Generate a list, including

- Police harassment
- Threats
- Imprisonment of political activists
- Torture
- Killing of those who speak out against oppressive system

Ask class: How does this affect oppressed peoples' ability to express themselves and work towards freedom from oppression?

- People are afraid for themselves and their families.
- They feel hopeless, powerless.
- They feel there is no point in trying to change the system.

Ask class: What beliefs would you imagine the white people in power had about their rights to control other people?

- That white people are superior
- That they have the right to rule the land they "conquered"

- That they have the right to do whatever it takes to maintain the order they have established

How do you think they justified the oppression to themselves and to others?

- By saying that people of color need to be "ruled," or they will take over and cause chaos
- By saying that people of color are less intelligent and capable, and that they are unable to make good decisions.

How did the people in control act? How did they feel?

- Entitled, all-powerful, and that they could do whatever they wanted to
- Threatened and afraid that oppressed people would try to take power

How did the people at the bottom of the pyramid feel about their lack of power?

- Hopeless, angry, trapped, despairing, voiceless, powerless, vulnerable, vengeful, depressed, and self-destructive
- Fearful of speaking up against the oppressor, and fearful about teaching their children the truth of the situation because they might be imprisoned or killed.

Why didn't the people at the bottom of the pyramid tell those in power how they felt?

- They were afraid of being tortured, imprisoned or killed.

In violent relationships, the abusive person is at the top of the pyramid, and uses many different tactics to control his partner and keep her powerless. The person who is being abused experiences all of the same feelings of hopelessness, anger, loss of self-esteem, powerlessness, etc., that oppressed people feel. Some common tactics abusive people use to keep their partners under control are:

- Controlling financial resources
- Deciding whether or not their partner can work
- Determining who s/he sees socially
- Preventing their partner from making any family decisions
- Threatening to take the children away
- Expecting their partner to have sex whether they want to or not
- Punishing their partner when they do something the abusive person doesn't want them to do.

Ask class: What beliefs in your culture support men's violence against women?

Examples:

- That men are superior: more intelligent, more capable, make better decisions
- That men have the right to do whatever it takes to control their wife or partner
- That women who are battered deserve or like to be hit
- That when men get angry they have the right to become violent
- That domestic violence is a private matter between two people and it's no one else's business.

The Power and Control Wheel (developed by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project in Duluth, Minnesota) on page 1-5 of the workbook describes several other kinds of abusive behaviors which are not physical.

Each spoke of the wheel shows a tactic that an abusive person may use to control or maintain power over his partner. The rim of the wheel is physical and sexual violence. Violence is what holds the system together.

Effects of DV on the Victim

Tell the class to refer to page 1-6 in the workbook. Lots of times we hear people say about a battered woman, "Why doesn't she just leave?" Think about what it is like to be a woman whose husband is doing everything on the Power and Control wheel. What would her days be like?

Ask class to generate list, including:

- No privacy
- No freedom to express ideas, especially when she doesn't agree with her husband
- Constant fear for herself and her children
- No freedom to spend money, make decisions about how to spend it
- No freedom to decide when/in what way to have sex
- Limited contact with friends, family members
- Insulted, humiliated, embarrassed
- Having the rules she sets for the children undermined or changed
- No help with the children
- No time for herself

- Is blamed and punished for children's misbehavior
- Sees her children being punished abusively
- Exhausted
- No security in terms of her sense of safety, stability

Let's just think about how this would affect a woman's ability to be a Mom.

Write list on board. Include:

- Afraid for her children
- Feels powerless to protect them
- Feels guilty about the violence
- Feels ashamed
- Feels she has no authority as a Mom
- Afraid of losing her children
- Has no privacy
- Feels undermined
- Blames herself for being a bad Mom

This is just a brief overview. We will come back to this in more detail later.

Effects of DV on the Perpetrator

Perpetrators of domestic violence inflict pain and fear on their families, and they also experience some negative consequences themselves for using violence.

Think about what it is like to be a man who is doing many of the things on the Power and Control wheel. How would his use of violence affect his relationship with his wife or partner?

Ask class to generate a list:

- Loss of trust from his partner.
- Loss of intimacy.
- Loss of respect.

- Loss of self-respect.
- Fear of getting caught.
- Possible arrest and jail-time if police are called.
- Possible loss of job and friends.
- Possible loss of partner and children.

How might his use of violence affect his relationship with his children?

Ask class to generate list, including: His children

- are afraid of him
- run away when he tries to show them affection
- withhold information about their lives
- don't ask him for help or support
- don't talk freely with him
- aren't able to have fun with him because they are afraid of what he might do
- lie to him to protect themselves or their Mom
- use violence against him
- don't respect him

Homework: We have defined DV as a whole system of actions that one person uses to dominate and control another person. Most people have been in a situation where they have been controlled by another person or institution. Many people have experiences with bosses who are very controlling.

Tell the class: Think of a situation where you felt controlled by another person or situation and you were unable to leave the situation (a job, your parents' house when you were little, a relationship, school or other institution, etc.). It should be a situation where the person had more power than you did. Turn to page 1-7 in the student workbook and answer these questions:

- What did the person or people do to control you?
- How did you feel? How did you think about the person or people who were controlling you?
- How did do you think the person controlling you felt towards you?
- What kept you from leaving the situation sooner than you did?

Session 2: The Effects of Domestic Violence on Kids

Objectives:

1. To help parents understand the effects of DV on their kids.
2. To help them understand more about their children's feelings and experiences.

Lesson Plan:

- Homework Review
- Story Exercise
- Small Group Exercise
- Summary
- Homework

For the first exercise, each participant will be asked to imagine that they are a boy or girl of a particular age. To prepare for the session, create an index card for each class member that says what age they are. For example, write "8" on a card to indicate that the person is eight years old. Make cards for ages 6-12 (to coincide with the content of the story).

Homework Review

Remind class that the homework assignment was to think of what it felt like to control other people and what it felt like to be controlled.

Ask for a two or three volunteers to talk about the assignment.

Story Exercise

Tell class: We are going to talk today about the effects of DV on kids. We're going to start with an exercise to understand this. Everyone is going to get a card saying what age they are (for example, eight years old).

The purpose of this exercise is to understand the effect of DV on children so we can better help our children. It is difficult, but try not to judge the mother or father for what they did or didn't do. Just listen from the point of view of the child.

Give each participant a card with an age written on it. Tell them to imagine that they are a child of that age while you are reading the story. Before you begin, write titles for two columns on the board: **Abusive Behavior** **Child's Feeling**

After each anecdote, stop and list the abusive behavior and the child's feeling.

Tell class:

So far, you have grown up with both parents. You love both your parents. Sometimes they get along very well. Your father is sometimes very nice to you. He is handsome and funny. He makes you laugh. You want them to be together. The violence in your home has been going on since you were born. As I read the different situations, think about how you might feel, and what you might learn from each situation.

1. Lots of times, when you are having a family dinner at home, your father tells your mother that he can't stand the way she chews. She is a slob. She is so gross. He can't bear to look at her. He tells her to wipe the grease off her chin. She takes a napkin and wipes her face. She looks down and doesn't say anything.

Ask class and list on board: What was the abusive behavior? What would the child feel?

2. Your mother is doing a load of laundry and cooking dinner. You are playing on the floor in the living room. Your sister is napping. Your father comes home and trips on one of your toys. Your father screams at your mother and tells her she's a slob and why doesn't she ever clean the house. Your mother tells him to stop. He tells her to quit her bitching. Your sister wakes up and starts screaming. Your mother says that he shouldn't talk like that in front of you. Your father slams her against the wall and hits her. On his way out the door he says he wants the house clean when he gets home. You are crying. Your mother is crying. She hugs you and tells you not to worry. Things will be OK.

Ask class and list on board: What was the abusive behavior? What would the child feel?

3. Your father comes home the next night. He brings you a beautiful new kite. He says he's sorry he upset you, but if your mother were a better housekeeper these things wouldn't happen. He hugs you and the two of you go outside to fly your kite.

Ask class and list on board: What was the abusive behavior? What would the child feel?

4. You aren't doing so well in math class. You just can't concentrate. You get a D. You bring your report card home. Your mother tells you that you shouldn't show it to your father. Later, your father finds it. At that moment, your mother is on the phone with a friend. Your father calls you into the living room and asks you why you're doing so badly. You say you don't know. He keeps asking you. When you don't answer he gets very angry. He takes off his belt and hits you across the legs. Your mother comes running in and physically tries to stop him. He throws her to the ground. He says to her, "Maybe if you weren't so busy yacking on the phone all the time, my kid would be doing better in school." He tells you that you better answer him next time he asks you a question. The next night your mother offers to help you with your math homework.

Ask class and list on board: What was the abusive behavior? What would the child feel?

5. You're driving home from a family picnic. You're on a narrow back road. You had a great time playing with your cousins. Your parents smiled at each other the whole time and you feel good.

Things are going to work out. Your father was drinking beer all day. He and your mother are singing. There's a fork in the road and your father asks your mother which way to go. She says, "I don't know." She grabs a map and tries to open it. Your father starts screaming at her and telling her she's a stupid bitch. He accelerates and drives 90 miles an hour around a sharp curve. You notice the speedometer. Your mother pleads with him to slow down. Your little sister starts crying. Another car comes and your father slams on the brakes. You are holding on to your sister. Your father turns around and smiles at you. "Close call, huh?" You smile back.

Ask class and list on board: What was the abusive behavior? What would the child feel?

6. Your father seems to have disappeared for good. You haven't seen him in a long time. Your mother is always worried about money now. You had to move out of your house to a small apartment in a yucky building. There are lots of strange people on your street. You had to change schools. You don't have a yard to play in. You never see your friends anymore. The other kids in school tease you a lot for the way you dress. You're the new kid. You don't understand what's going on in most of your classes. You hope your father will come back. Then you can move back into your house and have your yard and your friends back. Maybe your Mom and Dad will get along. When you ask your mother when he's coming back, she just says she doesn't know. You wait to hear from him. You're afraid to ask because your Mom doesn't seem to want to talk about it.

One day you're leaving the new school and your Dad is standing by the door. You shout "DADDY!" He picks you up, gives you a big hug and says you're going for a ride with him. You go out to your favorite restaurant and he gives you a nice present. He asks you where you live now. You are eager to see him so you tell him. He asks you if your Mom is seeing anyone new. Then he tells you that your Mom won't let him see you anymore. He asks, "Do you miss me?" You start to cry. He says you can stay the night with him if you want to. Do you want to?

Ask class and list on board: What was the abusive behavior? What would the child feel?

7. He takes you to his new place. It's a very nice apartment with a view of the mountains and the Sound. He has a whole room that he says is just for you when you come to visit. He's bought all the toys you said you wanted but didn't have. He has a huge TV with the video game you always wanted. You play for a while. Later you tell him you need to call Mom. He says you can call later. He takes you to a fun movie. He asks you how you like school. You remind him to call Mom. He asks for her number. He calls her and tells her that you're with him. He says he just wants to spend some time with his own child. You can tell by the way he's talking that she's angry. He sounds calm. He says he loves you. He gets off the phone and says your Mom is just crazy. She broke up your family and now she doesn't even want you to spend time with him. He asks you where you'd rather live.

Ask class and list on board: What was the abusive behavior? What would the child feel?

Tell class: Take a few minutes and answer the questions on pages 2-2 and 2-3 of student workbook.

- How old were you?

- How did you feel about your father?
- How did you feel about your mother?
- Who did you blame?
- What did you want to do?
- How might you think men and women are supposed to act in relationships?
- What was it like to be an adult participating in this exercise?

Ask for three or four volunteers to share their experiences. This may be difficult for some people, as many participants may have lived with DV.

Group Exercise

If you have nine or more students, break up into three groups to look at effects. Assign one topic to each. Otherwise, do the following as a large group exercise.

Tell the class that you are going to take some time to think more about the impact of DV on children. Break the class into three groups, if necessary, and discuss the following questions. They can write down their answers on page 2-4 of their workbooks.

This is a difficult topic, but it is the first step in trying to help our kids.

When children witness domestic violence in their home:

1. How do they feel?
2. What do they learn?
3. How do they act?

Bring the group back together and share answers. Generate lists on the board. Point out to the class that there is a place in the workbook to write these lists down.

How do children feel?

- scared
- powerless
- confused
- bad
- helpless

- angry
- self-blaming
- anxious
- guilty about loving the abusive parent
- guilty about not protecting abused parent
- worried about the future
- worried about possible loss of a parent
- insecure
- hopeless
- split down the middle
- numb

What do they learn?

- Other people are responsible for my behavior
- I am responsible for other peoples' behavior
- Men have the right to control women
- Violence is an appropriate way to solve problems
- My mother is to blame for my father's violence
- The violence is my mother's fault
- Women have no rights
- My mother can't protect me
- Nothing is safe
- Domestic violence is normal
- Intimidation is the way to get what you want
- Other people have the right to abuse me
- My father's violence is my fault

- It's OK to abuse my mother

How do they act?

- Regress: bedwetting, whining, temper tantrums
- Earlier childhood fears return
- Aggressive to other kids, brothers and sisters, pets
- Treat Mom like Dad treats her
- Experience problems concentrating
- Easily distracted
- Fight at school
- Get bad grades
- Lie, steal
- Withdraw and unusual shyness
- Forgetful
- Have trouble sleeping
- Very anxious
- Physical illness: stomach aches, nausea, headaches
- Easily startled
- Unable to play
- Highly sensitive to noise
- Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) symptoms*

(*Note: Some children who have witnessed DV are incorrectly diagnosed with ADD. They are given medication for ADD, when they may really need counseling and support for having witnessed domestic violence).

Impact of DV on Kids

How do children feel?

What do they learn?

How do they act?

Summary

Tell class:

As we have described, DV can have a lot of bad effects on children. But there are lots of things parents can do to help. The first step is understanding these effects. The next step is learning to talk to our kids.

Homework:

Review the list of the effects of domestic violence on children. If you have had violence in your home, what are some of the effects you have seen in your children? Answer the questions on page 2-5 in the workbook.

- How do they feel about the violence?
- What have they learned from the violence?
- How do they act as a result of the violence?

Session 3: How to Help Our Kids

Objectives:

1. To introduce some ways to help children when they have witnessed DV
2. To explain the impact of denial on children
3. To understand children's emotional needs after they have witnessed DV

Lesson Plan:

- Homework review
- Helping our kids when they have witnessed DV
- The impact of denial of DV on kids
- Obstacles to talking to our kids about DV
- Benefits of talking to kids about the violence
- Emotional needs of children who have witnessed DV

Homework Review

How have your kids been affected by DV? Ask for three or four volunteers from the class. At this time, don't give any advice. Just listen and understand.

Helping Our Kids When They Have Witnessed DV

Tell class: Many parents say that the experience of domestic violence didn't affect their children. They may see that their children are acting "normal," doing well in school, and playing with their friends.

It is important to understand that children learn to define themselves and to understand the world around them from what they observe at home. When very young children start to understand the idea of "ME" they watch their Mom and their Dad, or whomever is taking care of them. A child begins to develop her concept of "ME" from how each of her parents interacts with her, and how her parents interact with each other. She defines herself as "Like Mom" and "Like Dad," and "Like Mom and Dad."

Many other people and experiences contribute to a child's idea of "ME," including brothers and sisters, friends, teachers, other family members, etc., but a child's sense of self begins to develop at home. This is the child's self that begins to interact with the outside world.

Tell class: We have been talking about the effects of DV on kids. There are lots of things we can do to help them when they have witnessed DV. Two of the most important things are

- Talking to them
- Listening to them

Explain to class that it is normal for people who have been in a violent relationship to NOT want to talk to their kids about it. It is easier to pretend that it didn't happen, that the kids didn't know about it, that they will just forget about it.

Denying the violence often causes kids to be more confused and scared.

Refer to page 3-2 in the student workbook. Review the page and then ask the class for other ideas and write them on the board.

Ask for questions.

Ideas for helping our kids when they've witnessed DV:

- Talk about it with them when they are ready
- Listen to them
- Talk about their feelings

- Show understanding
- Let them know it's not their fault
- Let them talk, if they want to
- Let them know you love them
- Let them know you will try to keep them safe/act in a way that is safe
- Let them know the violence is not okay
- Acknowledge it's hard/scary for them
- Accept that they may not be willing or able to talk about it right away
- Always act in a way that is non-threatening and non-violent with your kids
- Take them to counseling if they need it
- Set limits respectfully when your child is acting violent (to be discussed further in a later session.)
- Don't expect your child to respond immediately.

Impact of Denial on Kids

Tell class: When we don't talk to our kids about it, they make their own assumptions, and learn some negative lessons of what is supposed to happen in a relationship.

Refer to page 3-3 in Student workbook This is a story from an advocate who works with children in a DV shelter.

The advocate's story>

I worked with Amy, a little girl who was six years old. Her Mom never said anything to her about the violence, or why they were staying in the shelter. In our groups, we have the kids draw pictures. Amy drew a picture of a man and a woman in a house. The man had his mouth wide open. She told me that it was Amy and her husband when she grew up. I asked her what her husband was doing. Why did he have his mouth wide open. She said, "He's yelling." I said, "Why is he yelling?" Amy said, "'Cause he loves her."

Here is a story from a 39-year-old man who has been arrested for domestic violence ten times.

Bill's story

My father used to beat on my step-mom all the time, right in front of me. No one ever talked about it. No one said anything. I got so used to it, I would just sit there and eat snacks, watch TV, like

nothing was going on. I've never really beat on my wife like he did; I just slap her and push her around sometimes.

Discuss the stories in terms of the impact of denial on kids

Write on the board: How Denial of DV Affects Kids

Ask class to generate list on board of the effects of denial on kids. Refer to page 3-3 in the student workbook.

How Denial Affects Kids

- Child learns that the violence is normal
- Child is afraid to talk about the violence
- Child is confused, doesn't understand
- Blames her/himself
- Learns to deny and not to talk about their own feelings
- Makes them feel like they are crazy
- Makes them feel lonely, isolated from their friends
- Learns that it's not OK to ask about the violence or discuss it
- Gives children unrealistic beliefs about the causes of the violence

It's a lot scarier for kids when no one ever talks to them about the violence.

Obstacles to Talking to Our Kids and Working to Overcome Them

Tell class: It is often difficult to talk to our kids about the violence. There are lots of things that make it difficult. We are going to work in small groups and list the obstacles to talking to our kids.

Write on the board: What are the obstacles to talking to our kids about domestic violence? How can we overcome these?

Divide the class into smaller groups and ask them to generate a list of obstacles, followed by ways to overcome them. Ask students to turn to page 3-4 in their workbooks and write down their answers.

Bring the group together again, Before you begin, write titles for two columns on the board: Obstacles Overcoming Obstacles

Ask the groups to share the obstacles they identified, and then brainstorm ways to overcome them.

Below are some examples of obstacles and ways to overcome them. As you go through this exercise, acknowledge each parent's feeling, and remind them that no matter how young their child was or how far away from the physical violence when it occurred, the child probably has a sense that something scary happened. Emphasize the importance of talking to children about the violence.

Examples of Obstacles

- I have tried to talk about it. My child won't listen.
- I feel uncomfortable.
- I'm scared to bring it up.
- I don't know what to say.
- I don't have time.
- I'm embarrassed.
- I'm afraid I'll make things worse.
- I don't think it's such a big deal.
- It's over now, why talk about it.
- I don't want them to hate their Dad/Mom.
- They won't understand.
- They didn't know it happened.
- They are too young to hear about it.
- They'll just be more scared.
- They'll tell other people.
- Their Dad/Mom will be mad.

Examples of Ways of Overcoming Obstacles

- Be patient. Don't push it. Try another time. They usually hear you anyway.

- Acknowledge that it may be uncomfortable for you to talk about the violence. Try to get more comfortable by talking to someone you trust.
- Acknowledge that it may be scary for you to remember the violence. It's scary for your kids, too. Once you start talking, it may feel less scary.
- Acknowledge that saying that you don't have time is probably because it's difficult, or you don't feel capable of talking to your child about it.

If you don't know what to say, pay close attention next week, when we'll talk more about it.

Benefits of Talking to Kids About the Violence

Tell class: There are many benefits to talking to kids about the violence. What do you think some of these are?

Examples of benefits:

- Children feel safer.
- They learn that violence isn't their fault.
- They learn that violence isn't an OK way to solve problems.
- It helps them to feel cared for, and understood.
- Children learn that it's OK to talk about feelings.

Tell class: To summarize the emotional needs of kids who have witnessed DV, we are going to discuss page 3-5 in the student workbook.

Emotional Needs Of Children Who Have Witnessed DV

Child's Emotion: Fear

- Fear of those they love in their own home, where they should feel most safe

Child needs to:

- Be able to talk to someone they trust about their feelings
- Learn ways to keep themselves safe and to know they have a plan for what to do when there is violence
- Have a feeling of control in the situation ("I will go over to my neighbors when it happens")

Child's Emotion: Anger

- Anger at the abuser, or at the survivor for not leaving the situation

Child needs to:

- Know that it is *normal and okay* to feel angry about this
- Be able to talk about the feelings with someone they trust
- Express their anger in non-destructive ways

Child's Emotion: Mixture of anger and love

- Feeling torn between feelings of anger and love toward the abuser. Feeling guilty for both feelings

Child needs to:

- Learn that it's okay to feel both anger and love toward someone
- Know it is okay to love their parent even when they hate the behavior they see
- Know they are not bad if they love the abuser

Child's Emotion: Confusion about being able to love both parents

- Feeling they need to take sides (e.g. "if I love Mom, I can't love Dad" and vice versa)

Child needs to:

- To know that it is okay to love both parents at the same time

Child's Emotion: Loss

- Loss of a healthy, safe family
- Loss of one parent if they leave (or the constant threat of this)
- Loss of comfort in the home

Child needs to:

- Talk about feelings with someone they trust
- Develop a support system of extended family or friends outside the home

Child's Emotion: Guilt/Responsibility

- Guilt for causing the violence, or not stopping it somehow

- Responsible for preventing the violence, and taking care of Mom and the family

Child needs to:

- Understand that the violence is not their fault, and that it is an adult problem for the adults to work out.

Child's Emotion: Feeling life is unpredictable (never knowing when a crisis will erupt)

- Feeling vulnerable on a daily basis, with no power or control about what will happen

Child needs to:

- Find areas in their lives where they can have control and make plans and decisions
- Create a safety plan with someone they trust
- Create some structure and stability wherever possible (creating daily routines that provide a sense of control)

End the discussion by repeating that talking to your kids about DV is very difficult for most people and takes a lot of work, patience, and commitment. In our next class session, we will talk more about ways to talk to your kids.

Homework

1. Ask students to review page 3-5, 3-6 & 3-7 of their workbooks. Ask them to check off the needs they think their child has.
2. Ask students to think about what they want their children to know when they talk to them about the violence in their family. They can write down their ideas on page 3-8 of their workbooks.

Session 4: Talking to Children About Domestic Violence

Objectives

1. To teach parents what messages their kids need to hear
2. To help them learn to listen and respond

Lesson Plan

- Homework review
- Talking to our kids

- Children's responses when we talk to them
- Listening to our kids
- Listening for and accepting feelings
- Obstacles to listening

Homework Review:

Have parents share:

- what they think their children's emotional needs are
- what they want their children to know about domestic violence

List the responses on the board and discuss.

Talking to Our Kids

Refer to page 4-2 in Student Workbook. Tell class: We're going to start by reading a story from a Mom who talked to her child about a DV incident after it happened.

Kathy's Story

I had never talked to my daughter about it at all. But when we were staying in a shelter and she was in a kids' group and all the kids were drawing pictures, my daughter drew a picture of a hospital emergency room. She drew herself in the waiting room, crying and she drew me on a stretcher, bleeding. I was really surprised. I asked her what the picture was. She said, "You were hurt, I was sad. I was waiting for you, alone." I hugged her. I said, "I'm so sorry you had to see me get hurt. I had no idea you were so sad about it. It must have been very hard for you." I told her that I would try to make sure things were safe for us.

Ask class: What messages did this mother give her child as she was talking to her? What else could she have said? What messages do you think children need to hear about domestic violence from the survivor?

List responses on the board.

Ask class to turn to page 4-3 in their workbooks and review "What Children Need to Hear about DV from the Survivor."

What Children Need to Hear About Domestic Violence from the Survivor

- It's not okay.

- It's not your fault.
- It must be scary for you.
- I will listen to you.
- You can tell me how you feel; it is important
- I'm sorry you had to see/hear it.
- You do not deserve to have this in your family.
- I will keep you safe.
- There is nothing you could have done to prevent/change it.
- We can talk about what to do to keep you safe if it happens again. (For example, staying in your room, going to neighbors, etc., which will be discussed in detail in safety session).
- I care about you. You are important.

Have class turn to page 4-4 in their workbooks. Tell class: Now we are going to talk about how an abusive person can talk to his child about the violence. This is what Frank said to his sons after he was arrested for domestic violence:

Frank's Story

"I talked to my boys. I explained to them that yelling at their Mom and hitting her was wrong. I said, "I went to jail because I slapped your Mom. When you do wrong, this is what happens." Later I talked to them some more. I told them that it wasn't just getting locked up. I hurt their Mom, and scared her, and I scared them too. I told them they should never do to a woman what I did to their Mom. I think they understood."

Ask class the following questions, and list the responses on the board:

- What messages did Frank give his sons?
- What else could he have said?
- How would he need to act in front of his children and with their Mom?
- What would the children learn if Frank admitted to his children that he was wrong and then hit their Mom again?
- What messages do you think children need to hear about domestic violence from the abusive person?

Have class turn to page 4-5 in their workbooks and review.

What Children Need to Hear About Domestic Violence from the Abuser

- My behavior was not okay, violence is not okay.
- I am responsible.
- It's not your fault.
- It's not your mother's fault.
- I am sorry you had to see/hear that.
- You must have been scared.
- I will listen to you
- It's okay if you are mad at me, scared of me. I would be, too.
- You shouldn't have to have this happen in your family.
- Your feelings are important.
- I am getting help so you can feel safer.

Children's Responses When We Talk to Them

Ask class: How do you think your child might respond when you try to talk to her or him about the violence?

Generate list. Have class fill in page 4-6 in their workbooks as you write list on board. Make two columns, one for *Responses* and one for *Feelings*

- Ignore you
- Change the subject; for example, "I'm hungry"
- Blame you; for example, "If you were nicer to him, he wouldn't hit you," or "You should have done what he said"
- Put her hands over her ears
- Kick his Lego set
- Run to her room and slam the door
- Say "Don't worry, Mom," and try to cheer you up

- Scream at you, call you names and say "You're so mean to my Mom"
- Hit you.
- Listen quietly, without saying anything
- Say, "It's no big deal"

Ask class: What feelings do you think the kids in these examples are having?

List feelings on the board next to each response.

Tell class: Once we start talking to our kids about DV, we need to be ready to listen to them, and accept their responses. So the next thing we're going to talk about is listening to our kids.

Listening to Our Kids

Tell class: In order to help kids understand and talk about the DV, we need to learn to listen to them. We are going to break up into small groups. Each group should answer both of these questions:

- How do you know when someone is listening to you?
- How do you know when someone is not listening to you?

Give the class about ten minutes to discuss these questions. Tell them to write down their answers on page 4-7 of their workbooks. Then ask them to return to the large group. Ask each group to share its answers.

Tell the class: Many of us have the tendency to do everything *except* listen, including telling our own experiences, offering advice, denying the other person's feelings, trying to psychoanalyze, or just changing the subject. There is nothing wrong with any of these responses. But they aren't the same as listening.

Here are some examples of the ways we don't listen.

Read the following situation to the class. Your friend says to you, *"My boss is really a jerk. Yesterday he gave me an assignment at 4:00 and expected me to have it done by 5:00, when he knows it takes a whole day to do it. I had to stay late to finish it and I missed the last bus home. When I came in to work this morning he didn't even say anything to me."*

Read each of the following responses to the class and after each response ask participants to think about how that response feels. Write the feeling on the board.

Telling our own experience: Yeah, my boss is a real pain too. I was on the phone with my wife yesterday because my son got in trouble in school. So my boss comes in and says that next time he sees me on the phone he's going to take the time out of my paycheck.

Giving advice: Just try to forget it. It's only a job; it's not your whole life. Denying the other person's feeling-What are you complaining for anyway? You should be happy. At least you have a job. Do you know how many people are unemployed in this country right now?

Trying to psychoanalyze: You know, you really seem to have problems with authority figures. Maybe you should look at that.

Changing the subject: Really? So what do you want to have for dinner?

Asking questions: Why didn't you just tell him it wouldn't be enough time? How many hours worth of work was it anyway?

Defense of the other person: He was probably under a time crunch, too, you know. And he probably didn't think of saying anything to you this morning because he has so much work to do.

Pity: Oh, you poor thing. That must have been terrible.

Listening: That sounds pretty frustrating.

Have class turn to page 4-8 in their workbooks. Review "How to Listen and How Not to Listen."

How to Listen

- Don't interrupt.
- Look at the person who is talking.
- Give them your full attention, if possible.
- Answer in a way that lets them know you are listening.
- Don't express an opinion or say that the other person is right or wrong.
- Let them know you understand their point of view.
- Being a good listener takes effort and practice. Try to hear what the person is saying, even if you don't agree.

How to Not Listen

- Don't look at the person speaking
- Interrupt him
- Correct him
- Give advice

- Tell her she is wrong
- Tell her not to feel what she is feeling
- Change the subject
- Ask a lot of questions

Listening For and Accepting Feelings

Tell class: Sometimes just listening quietly without saying anything is the best thing to do. And sometimes children need us to listen to their feelings, and to let them know that we hear and accept the feelings. We are not judging them or telling them the feelings are right or wrong.

Ask class to turn to and review page 4-9 in their workbooks.

Tips for Listening For and Accepting Feelings Learning to listen can be difficult. Here are some tips:

- Listen for the feeling you hear.
- Let them know you hear them. Say, "It seems like you feel _____."
- Don't say anything else. Allow some time for the child to respond.
- Don't tell your child what to do, how to feel better, or why he feels the way he does.

After your child has had time to respond, you can let her know you understand by saying things like

- That sounds frustrating, hard, etc.
- Sometimes I feel that way, too.
- I understand.
- I'm here for you if you want to talk about it now, or later.

Tell class: Recognizing the person's feeling is saying, "You sound like you are really disappointed." or "You seem angry." Doing this is harder than it sounds. So we're going to practice now.

Ask class to turn to page 4-10 in their workbooks.

Listening for and Accepting Feelings

Below are some examples of things kids say. For each example, we are going to think of two responses to the child: one that denies his or her feeling (not listening) and one that acknowledges his or her feeling (good listening).

Example:

"I thought we were going to stay home and rent a movie! I don't want to go to Aunt Marie's house again. I HATE Aunt Marie!"

Denial of the feeling: "Don't talk like that about your Aunt Marie. You know you love her. Now get your shoes on!"

Acknowledgement of the feeling: "You sound really disappointed."

Read examples to class and ask for response that denies feeling and response that acknowledges feeling.

1. "I don't want to play with Eric ever again. He's stupid!"
2. "Why do you always have to tell me what to do?"
3. "I don't want you to go. Don't leave!"
4. "I'm not going to go to math class anymore!"
5. "Nina wrecked my picture. I'm gonna wreck hers!"
6. "It's my room. Why should I clean it?"
7. "You're mean! I hate you!"

Obstacles to Listening

Ask the class: What gets in the way of listening to our kids?

Generate a list of obstacles to listening on the board. Ask the class to write ideas on page 4-12 of their workbook. Include:

- You are too tired.
- You are in a hurry.
- You have too much to do.
- You want to teach your child instead of listen to her.
- You don't think what your child is saying is important.
- You don't like what your child is saying.
- You have heard it many times before.

Homework: Tell class to turn to page 4-13 in their workbooks. Ask them to take 10 minutes this week to listen to their children. Ask them to try to use some of the skills we learned today and to write down how it felt.

Session 5: Safety Planning for Victims of Domestic Violence

Objectives

1. To help women name and understand the ways that batterers use children to maintain control
2. To help women plan for their own and their children's safety
3. To briefly review some legal issues related to DV

Lesson Plan

- Homework review
- Understanding how batterers use children for control
- Safety planning with your children
- Batterers' tactics in Court
- Building safety into the parenting plan

Homework Review

Ask class:

Homework for last week was listening to your kids for 15 minutes. How did that go?

Invite participants to share.

Understanding How Batterers Use Children for Control

Refer to page 5-2 in student workbook. Tell class: We are going to talk today about the different ways that batterers may use the children against their partner or former partner. Then we will discuss some things you can do to protect yourself and your children from these tactics.

This is a story from a woman who was battered by her husband, Karl, for eight years until she left with their 4-year-old daughter, Anna.

Kim's Story

"When we were getting ready to go to school one morning, Anna got her shoes on before I was ready and ran out into the yard, opened the gate and ran around the outside of the car to wait for me. I was about 10 feet behind her. She ran about halfway across the street as though it was a game. No cars passed, and I managed to get hold of her. Karl had seen the whole thing from the window and was very angry with me. He grabbed Anna from me and put her in the living room. He ordered me in the house and right in front of Anna, he hit me very hard across the head at least two times and kicked me in the leg. He yelled at me about what I was doing and said he had seen the whole thing. He said that Anna could have been killed and that if anything happened to her while she was in my care, he would kill me. "Karl has called me stupid, dumb and slow so many times that Anna has learned the vocabulary, sometimes using it on her dolls, and at times on me. She has also called me a "nasty bitch," which she didn't learn from me."

Ask class: What were some of the ways that Karl used Anna to control his wife?

Generate a list and write it on the board.

Tell class: While many batterers want to be good fathers, they still use the children to gain control over their kids' Mom. Use of violence against your children's Mom is not compatible with good parenting.

Ask class: What are some other ways that your husband or partner has used the children against you?

Write the list on the board. Have the class write the list on page 5-3 of their workbooks. Include:

- Criticizing mother in front of the children
- Getting children to take his side against her
- Questioning children about mother's activities
- Yelling at the mother when the kids misbehave
- Blaming her for separation or divorce
- Telling them that she is crazy or a drunk or an addict, etc.
- Getting other family members to speak badly about her to the kids

Take a few minutes to process this exercise. It can generate a lot of feelings for Moms.

Safety Planning With Your Children

Tell class: Unfortunately, children are often physically and always emotionally endangered when domestic violence occurs. It is important to help them find ways to stay safe. Developing a safety plan with your kids can be complex. The goals for the safety plan are usually:

1. For children to be physically safe
2. For them to know where and how to get help.

When safety planning with kids, it is important to let them know that they are NOT responsible for the violence, and they can NOT stop it.

There are several steps you can take to safety plan with your kids. The first step is talking to your kids about the violence. We discussed this in Session 3.

Ask class:

- How many of you here have been able to talk to your kids about the violence?
- If few participants have, go back to discussion of obstacles to talking to kids about the violence.

Tell class: Think of a situation where your child has been in danger from his or her Dad's violent behavior. What would you have liked him or her to know and do?

Ask for one or two examples from participants.

Examples:

- Call my sister to get help
- Go to her house
- Call 911

Tell class: When you develop a safety plan with your children, think about what your child is actually able to do. A three-year-old can't walk four blocks by herself to a friend's house. A five-year-old might have trouble staying in his room for three hours. The plan should be age-appropriate.

Review page 5-4 in the student workbook, "Steps for Safety Planning When Violence Takes Place at Home"

Steps for Safety Planning When Violence Takes Place at Home

Identify a person or people who could help

- Focus on what your child thinks she could do to keep herself safe.
- Give her time to come up with her own solutions.
- Ask her who she thinks could help her, and whether she would feel comfortable asking that person.

Children should know that:

- The safety plan may not always work.
- It's not their fault if it fails.

Help your child to identify warning signs

First, think about what are the warning signs (if any) that you have when your partner is about to become abusive. Here are some examples:

- Mom and Dad are arguing
- Dad is raising his voice
- Dad and/or Mom is drunk/high
- Dad is namecalling or threatening
- Dad is slamming doors, stomping around

In talking to your child about his or her father, always stay focused on **behaviors**. You could say something like, "Sometimes your Dad acts in ways that are scary, and when he does, we need to do things to try to stay safe."

What kids can do to stay safe

They can:

- Go to their room
- Leave the house and go somewhere safe: a neighbor's house, a relative's house, or outside
- Stay out of the way
- Dial 911 if there is a phone where their Dad can't hear them
- Don't ever try to physically stop the violence

Tell your child that he or she **can't control** their Dad's behavior.

Ask the class to turn to page 5-5 in their workbook, the safety plan. Explain the plan to the class, and that it is something that a Mom should create WITH her child. Tell them that creating a safety plan will be this week's homework assignment.

Safety Plan For _____

This page is for Moms and kids to talk about together, and for kids to fill out with their Mom's help if they need it.

Who do I trust who can help me be safe when there is violence in our home? (Neighbor, relative)

Name of person: _____ Phone numbers: _____

What plan should I make with that person (Example: That person will call the police when I call to say there is a problem between my Mom and Dad, or will let me come to their house)

Where is a safe place for me to go when my Dad is acting in scary ways? (examples: our neighbor's house, a relative's house, etc. (List names of people)

If I can't leave, where is the safest place in the house for me to go? (Example, my bedroom, the basement, the bathroom)

If I can call 911, what should I say?

Tell the class to turn to page 5-6 in the workbook. Read the page and then discuss it in class.

Safety Planning For Yourself When Your Children Visit Their Dad

If you are afraid that your child's father may be abusive during visitation exchanges, try to arrange for supervised visitation. Ask a legal advocate at one of the programs for victims of domestic violence to tell you ways to do this. (see Resource List)

- Have the visitation rules clearly written in the legal documents, and follow them yourself. They should include very specific details about location, time, days, and arrangements for the safe transfer of the child.
- Be consistent with your visitation/parenting plan. Don't be manipulated or threatened into changing it.
- Don't get into arguments with your child's father about visitation. If he wants to argue about it with you, hang up the phone, or leave the situation.
- If you don't have supervised visitation, arrange for him to pick up the kids at someone else's house. Ideally, this person knows your situation and understands the risk to you.
- Have as little contact with him as possible over the phone and in person.

- Try to make your child's experience as positive as possible, even though this can be extremely difficult. (We will talk more about this later).

Safety Planning for Your Children When They Visit Their Dad

Tell class: Visitation can be difficult for any child, but it is especially difficult when there has been domestic violence. When a person who wants to maintain control over his partner loses contact with her, he often uses their children to try to regain control.

If you are separated from your abusive partner and your children visit with him, be aware that he may interrogate them about many things including:

- Your new address and phone number
- Where you are working
- Whom you are seeing
- Where you are going for counseling or support
- Whether you are drinking or using any drugs

If you are concerned about maintaining a confidential address and phone number, it is important to discuss with your child how he might respond when his Dad asks him questions about your life.

Have class turn to page 5-7 in their workbooks.

Here are some things you can discuss with your children to help them plan for visitation with their Dad. This can be very difficult to talk about. If you don't feel that you can talk about it, you might ask for help from a family member you trust, or from an advocate in a domestic violence program.

- Information about how to respond if their father interrogates them about your activities. **Example:** *Please don't ask me questions about my Mom. It's uncomfortable for me.*
- Information about the impact of drugs or alcohol on their Dad so that they have coping strategies for when he is intoxicated. **Example:** *Tell your child "When Dad is drinking a lot, he may start slurring his speech, walking unsteadily, etc. He may not be able to take care of you. You can call Grandma and ask her to take you to her house."*
- A plan for calling you or another family member who can help. They should know how to use the phone, how to make a long distance or credit card call, and how to ask an operator for help in making a call.
- Understanding that they may feel torn between loyalty to you and loyalty to their Dad.
- How to call 911 and what to say.

- If you have two or more children, you can talk to them about ways they can help to protect each other.

Legal Issues

If there are many women in the class who don't have orders for protection, and want them, you may want to include this information in the session. Brochures about protection orders should be available from your local court advocates. (In King County, call 206-296-9547 or call the Washington State hotline at 1-800-562-6025)

Orders for Protection

Refer to page 5-8 in student workbook

Tell class: If you are separated from your children's father and you don't already have an order for protection (OP), you may want to consider getting one. If you don't have a protective order or a court-approved parenting plan, he can legally have access to the children at any time.

An OP is a legal document issued by the court that is designed to protect a person from future domestic violence and allows the court to award other things to DV victims (e.g., custody of their children, use of certain property, etc.). If you need to restrict your children's father's access to the children, you will need an OP even if a no-contact order has already been issued. The no-contact order requires him to stay away from you, but doesn't prevent him from having contact with your children.

As the petitioner, you will not be charged for filing an order for protection. The court can provide the following protection in the order:

1. Give one parent custody and set a visitation schedule for the other parent's contact with the children;
2. Order the respondent from causing the petitioner any physical harm, bodily injury, assault, including sexual assault; and from molesting, harassing, threatening, or stalking the petitioner;
3. Order the respondent to stay away from the petitioner's residence, workplace, school, and the daycare or school of a child;
4. Restrain the respondent from coming near the petitioner and from any contact whatsoever, in person or through others, directly or indirectly;
5. Order the use/possession of essential personal effects or a vehicle; and
6. Order a party to undergo drug/alcohol treatment, batterer's treatment, or counseling.

The more complete and detailed information you have about the violence, the stronger the case you will have. You can prove that the violence took place by telling the court in your own words what happened, by submitting documents (witness declarations, police reports, medical records,

conviction records or dockets, pictures of your bruises, pictures of the property damage, batterer's treatment reports, statements from counselors, evaluations, etc.), to verify your claims.

Orders may be issued for a fixed period or for one year. Orders restraining the respondent from contacting his minor children, however, may only last up to a year. A petitioner may apply for renewal of the order within three months before her order expires.

If you need additional information about orders for protection, please call the numbers listed in the resource section under Protection Orders. It is helpful to talk to an advocate before getting a protection order. An advocate can explain the process and let you know if you qualify.

Batterers' Tactics in Court

In custody and divorce cases, many batterers will use abusive tactics to further abuse the Mom, and sometimes to try to gain custody of the children. What are some of abusive tactics that you have experienced?

Examples:

- Using information about the fact that you sought counseling, mental health or substance abuse treatment against you
- Making the claim that you were also violent to him
- Telling the court that you used drugs, or alcohol, and therefore are an unfit Mom
- Using your lack of financial resources against you

Ask class to brainstorm some ways to try to minimize the impact of these tactics.

Tell Class: Many judges and court commissioners have limited knowledge of the dynamics of domestic violence. Be as prepared as you can for this fact. You may want to try to build some safety planning into the parenting plan. (A parenting plan is a legal document that sets forth the conditions of visitation, including schedule, place of exchange, and any other requirements for both parents.)

Building Safety into the Parenting Plan

If you are developing a parenting plan through the court, and you do NOT have supervised visitation, consider asking the court to enter an order setting conditions for visitation. In addition to agreed upon times and dates, you could ask to include the child's right to contact the mother or another "safe" person by phone during visitation, and limitations on the batterer's behavior such as:

- Use no alcohol or drugs during the visit,
- Don't ask your children about you or any of your activities,
- Take the children to planned activities,

- Return their clothing and personal possessions,
- Remove weapons from the home during the visit,
- Other conditions that you think would be important to your child's safety.

Homework: Discuss safety planning with your children. Have one of your children fill out the Safety Plan on page 5-5. If this seems too difficult, think about what you might want to say to your children about it, and what the obstacles are to saying it.

Session 5: Accountability to Our Children - For Men Who Batter

Objectives:

1. To help men define responsible parenting
2. To look at the impact of DV on children
3. To help men be accountable to their children and others for the violence

Lesson Plan

- Define responsible parenting
- Look at the impact of participants' violent behavior on their children
- Discuss ways to help children feel safer
- Complete an accountability exercise

Responsible Parenting

Tell Class: Today we are going to talk about how each person defines responsible parenting. We will look at the impact of DV on children and talk about what it means to be accountable to our children for the violence.

Ask Class: What does it mean to be a responsible parent?

Have class turn to page 5-2 in their workbooks to write down ideas as they are discussed.

Generate a list on the board, including:

- Provide for children: shelter, food, clothing, education.
- Teach them positive values and skills for living.

- Teach them respect for others, including their mother.
- Understand their feelings and needs.
- Nurture them.
- Show them affection.

Ask Class: What did you learn from your parents about being a responsible parent?

Tell Class: Many men who have been violent to their children's Mom tell themselves that they have never hurt their children. ***But when a man is violent and abusive toward his children's Mom, he is also violent to his children.***

Take some time to listen to the class's reaction to this statement.

Have class turn to page 5-2 & 5-3 in their workbooks. Ask them to take a few moments to answer the questions. Ask for volunteers to share what they wrote. Think about any loud arguments or violence you saw or heard in your family when you were a kid.

- What did you see/hear?
- What did you do?
- How did you feel?
- How do you think this affected your relationship with your Dad or step-Dad?
- With your Mom?
- With your children's Mom?

How Violence Impacts Children

Have class turn to page 5-4 in student workbook. As we read Jack's story, pay attention to how his violence toward his son's Mom impacted his son.

Jack's Story

The night I got arrested, I was really upset because I lost my job. I went out and had a few drinks and when I got home, my wife, Linda, was upset with me because I was late and everyone had been waiting for me to get home to have dinner. The kids were running around making a lot of noise, and I just wanted to be left alone. I shouted at the kids to be quiet but nobody was listening to me. I told Linda to shut up and get the kids under control. Then I grabbed her by the shoulders and started shaking her. I had done stuff like that before. She told me to leave or she would call the police. My son, who is 7, was shouting at me to stop. My 5-year old daughter

was crying. I told Linda that if she called the police I'd make her really sorry. Then I left. I went out and had another drink. I came back and all the doors were locked and I had forgotten my keys. I banged on the door and she didn't open it, so I broke the kitchen window and climbed in. Linda screamed for help. We started arguing and I grabbed her by the neck and choked her. My daughter was holding my leg, trying to pull me off Linda. My son called the police. I shouted at him and he went and hid in the closet. Now, my son is scared of me. Every time I raise my hand to reach for something, he cowers, like I'm going to hit him. When I go to my daughter now, she runs away. One day about a month after the incident, I went into my son's room and he had his sister down on the floor and he was choking her. My daughter wasn't making a sound. I grabbed him, but I couldn't say anything. He was acting just like me. Lately, he's also been getting into trouble at school for starting fights with other kids.

Ask Class: What were Jack's abusive actions?

- He shouted.
- Told her to shut up.
- Made her responsible for the children's behavior.
- Grabbed her by the shoulders.
- Threatened her.
- Returned drunk and abusive.
- Broke the window.
- Choked her.

What did his children see and hear?

- Dad shouts at Mom and tells her to shut up.
- Tells her to get the kids under control.
- Then he grabs her by the shoulders and shakes her.
- He threatens her.
- He disappears.
- He comes back and bangs on the door.
- He breaks the kitchen window.

- He grabs and chokes Mom.

What did his children feel?

- Scared for their Mom
- Worried
- Responsible for the violence
- Responsible for protecting Mom
- Scared for themselves

How did they act as a result?

- Son cowers.
- Daughter runs away.
- Son chokes his sister.
- Daughter does not call for help.
- Son fights with other kids.

How did Jack's behavior affect his relationship with his children?

- They are afraid of him.
- They don't trust him.
- They may not come to him when they need help.

What do his children need from him in order to recover from experiencing the violence?

- No abuse or threats to Mom in the future
- Respectful behavior to Mom
- No physical punishment of children (Discussion of this topic follows)
- Calm voice
- Non-threatening facial expression
- Staying at eye-level with his child
- No threats to child

- Acknowledging that his use of violence was wrong
- Listening to his children when they talk
- Letting them know that they are important to him

Tell class Let's take some time now to do an exercise on the impact of a violent incident on your children, and what you can do to help them feel safe. Think of one incident when you were physically abusive or threatening to your children's Mom, and the children were at home. Use the form on page 5-5 of the student workbook to describe what your children saw and heard, and how it affected them. Then think about what your children need from you to feel safe, and what you can do to restore trust in your relationship with them.

Below are examples for this exercise from Jack's story. Use these examples to demonstrate how to do this exercise. Have participants take time to do this exercise individually. Then ask for one or two volunteers to share.

Table 1. Impact of Jack's Violent Behavior on His Children

Child Saw/Heard	Child Felt	How Child Might Act as a Result	What Child Needs From Me
Dad shouts at Mom to shut up	Scared, Angry	Starting fights with kids at school	
Tells Mom to get the kids under control	Responsible for the violence		
Grabs Mom by the shoulders and shakes her	Helpless		
Threatens Mom if she calls the police	Scared		
Disappears	Worried		
Comes back and bangs on door after threatening	Scared		
Breaks the window			
Chokes Mom	Responsible for Mom's safety, scared of Dad's reaction	Chokes his sister	

Physical Punishment in Families Who Have Experienced DV

Most children find spankings or whippings humiliating, and sometimes physically painful. But for children who have seen their Mom get physically hurt and threatened by their Dad, physical pun-

ishment can have a whole different meaning. Think of the effects of domestic violence on children that we talked about early on in this class.

Ask class: If you are a child who has seen or heard your Dad hit your Mom, and your Mom got a black eye, bruises, or other injuries, how would you feel when your Dad whipped or spanked you?

What would you be afraid of?

Generate a list on the board:

- Afraid of your Dad
- Afraid you will get hurt
- Afraid that no one can protect you
- Afraid that your Mom will get hurt if she tries to stop your Dad
- Afraid that when you get spanked you will get hurt

If you were a child who saw your Dad get your Mom to "obey" him by hitting her, and then got you to "obey" him by hitting you, what lessons might you learn?

Examples:

- Dad hits Mom and me, so hitting is the best way to get people to do what you want.
- People who are bigger and stronger have the right to hit people who are smaller and weaker to make them obey.
- It's OK to hit or to be hit by someone you love.

Tell class: There is another very damaging lesson that children learn when they witness DV and are punished physically by their parents: *Whenever I hit someone, it is the other person's fault.*

For example, a boy sees his Dad slap his Mom. Then he hears Dad tell Mom, "You shouldn't provoke me like that. You really asked for it." Later in the day, his Dad gets mad at him for jumping on the bed. Dad spansks him and says, "If you didn't jump on the bed like that, I wouldn't have to hit you. You know you're not supposed to do that."

This boy is learning from one of the most important people in his life that people get hit because they deserve to be hit. The person who hits is *not* responsible for hitting.

What do you think this boy would do when his little sister takes his cookie and eats it?

- What reason would he give for hitting her?
- What do you think this boy would do when his friend at school calls him "Stupid?"

- Who would he blame?

Kids tend to think this way anyway, but the negative lesson that "I am not responsible for my bad behavior" is strongly reinforced when a child witnesses DV and experiences physical punishment. They are more likely than children who never experience violence to carry this thinking into their adult relationships.

In the next few sessions, we will be learning positive ways to set limits with our kids. These include:

- Establishing consequences
- Listening
- Problem-solving
- Conflict prevention

Accountability to Our Children

Tell Class: Let's talk about some ways we can lessen the impact of violence on our kids. The first step is to be accountable to our children, and all the people in our children's lives who may have been affected by our abusive behavior.

What is the definition of accountability?

- Being responsible for one's actions. Being able to answer for one's conduct and obligations.

Tell class: DV in a family can affect many other people who are connected with that family.

Have the class turn to page 5-6 in student workbook. Listen to Roland's story and think about all the people in his son, Tim's, life who have been affected.

Roland's story

Roland and Tonya have been together for nine years. They have one son, Tim, who is seven. In their time together, Roland has hit, punched and threatened to kill Tonya. The last time Roland hit Tonya, seven-year-old Tim tried to stop him, and Roland pushed Tim out of his way. Tim fell and got bruises on his arms and legs and a scrape on his face. For Tonya, seeing Tim get hurt is too much. She leaves with Tim and goes to live with her sister in a different town. She files a No Contact Order (NCO) against Roland. Tim changes schools. He can't talk to any of his old friends because Tonya doesn't want Roland to find out where they live. She is afraid. Roland is very upset, and doesn't believe Tonya has the right to leave with their son. He calls Tim's school and asks Tim's favorite teacher where his son has gone. The teacher says he doesn't know, and Roland gets upset and hangs up on this teacher. Then Roland goes to Tonya's mother and pressures her to tell him where Tonya and Tim are living. Roland says, "Please tell me, I just want to see my son." Tonya's

mother feels badly for him and tells him that Tonya is living with her sister. Roland goes to Tonya's sister's house. When the sister answers the door, Roland demands to see his son. The sister says that Tim isn't there, but Roland doesn't believe her. They get into an argument and Roland threatens Tonya's sister. In the meantime, Roland's parents want to see their grandson. Roland says that Tonya has been "acting crazy" and has disappeared with Tim.

Let's think of all the people in Tim's life who are affected by Roland's use of violence:

- Tonya
- Tonya's mother
- Tonya's sister
- Tim's friends at school
- Tim's teacher
- Roland's parents

Let's look at how each person in Roland's life was affected, and what he can do to be accountable. Go over the grid below and fill in using Roland's story.

Table 2. Accountability

Who in my children's life was affected?	How were they affected?	How can I be accountable or safe in future interactions?	Obstacles
Tonya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physically hurt Scared for herself 	Acknowledge violence was wrong, remains nonviolent in interactions with her	My belief that I have the right to use force to get my son back
Tim's friends	Lost their friend	Be nonviolent towards Tim	
Tonya's sister	Scared, angry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Admit I was wrong Respect Tonya's right to NCO 	I want to see Tim
My parents	Sad, think it's Tonya's fault	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take responsibility for my violent behavior Tell them she was scared of me 	Embarrassment, shame Afraid they will be angry at me

Adapted from Accountability in the Wilder Curriculum

Tell class

Let's take some time to think through all the people who interact with our children and who may have been affected by our use of violence/abuse.

This can be a very difficult exercise, but as part of helping our children recover, it is important to think about each person who was affected and how they were affected.

Have each participant do this Accountability exercise in their workbook on page 5-7. Ask for volunteers to share.

Homework:

Have class turn to page 5-8 in workbook.

Think of four steps you can take to be accountable to your children. You can look back at Session 4 to review some of the messages we discussed.

Examples:

- Think about what we need to say to be accountable.
- Find a peaceful time to talk to our children.
- Acknowledge the specific violent behavior without rationalizing, blaming, etc.
- Tell our children that the behavior was wrong.
- Listen to our children's reaction, but do not demand a response.
- Be nonviolent in all future interactions with our children's Mom.
- Demonstrate to our children that we are safe to be around.
- Show them that we can be upset or angry without being scary.
- Speak positively to other family members about our children's Mom.
- Pay child support regularly (if applicable).

Think of some ways that your accountability can help your children.

Session 6: Parenting When You've Been a Victim of DV

Objectives:

1. To help mothers understand the impact of domestic violence on themselves as parents
2. To help them to stop blaming themselves for the violence
3. To reestablish leadership with their children
4. To talk to their children about separation and visitation
5. To strengthen their support systems

Lesson Plan:

- Homework review
- Impact of DV on Moms
- Establishing leadership with children
- Letting your child discuss their Dad at home
- Helping your child to feel comfortable with visitation

- Strengthening your support system

Homework Review

Ask class: Did you go through the safety plan with your child? How did it go? Ask for a few examples.

Tell class: We talked earlier about how DV affects the abused person and the children. Now let's think about how DV affects our parenting relationship with our kids.

Ask participants to think of ways DV affects their role as a Mom, both during and after the relationship with the batterer. Ask class to turn to page 6-3 in their workbooks. Generate a list on the board. Examples could include:

- Overly permissive
- Overprotective of children at times when they don't need her protection
- Unable to pay enough attention to the children because she is overwhelmed by the violence
- Afraid of what will happen when children misbehave in front of Dad
- Rescues children from Dad's discipline/abuse
- Has difficulty maintaining structure or routines because of the violence
- Unable to contain anger at the batterer, and turns it on the kids
- Stress and fatigue leaves little energy for the children
- Abusing drugs/alcohol as a way to cope with the violence
- Gives children whatever they want because she feels guilty
- Afraid to discipline because the batterer has threatened to report her to CPS or sue her for custody of the children

Ask class: How does DV affect the way children act towards their Mom?

List responses on the board. Be sure to include:

- View their Mom the way the abuser labels her (stupid, crazy, etc.)
- View their Mom as weak because she "takes" Dad's abuse
- Don't respect Mom
- Don't listen to her

- Put her down
- Use power and control tactics against Mom
- Use physical violence against Mom
- Demand that she do what they want
- Treat her exactly the way the batterer does
- Try to take care of her all the time

Tell class: DV can affect a Mom in a lot of different ways. Lots of Moms who have been battered experience the following:

- Self-blame for the violence and its impact on their children
- Loss of respect from the children and loss of leadership with them
- Feelings towards the batterer that come out at the kids
- High levels of anxiety and stress in daily life
- Fear of leaving the batterer because of the impact on the children

Tell class: Let's talk some more about each of these issues, and how to get past them.

Self-Blame

Tell class:

Most men who batter blame their partners for the violence. When we are abused and isolated from our friends and family, we often start to believe the batterer, and think that he is right: It's something we did or said (or something we didn't do) that caused him to be violent. It's also very difficult to look at the man you live with or are married to, and the man who is the father of your children, and acknowledge to yourself that this person yells at you and hits you for no reason.

Many battered women who are Moms not only blame themselves for the violence, but also for the problems their children might be experiencing as a result. When a parent feels badly about their child's painful or difficult experiences, a normal reaction is to be easy on the children to make up for the hardship. In some situations, it is very appropriate to be easy on them; for example, when a child falls down and gets a cut and a bad bruise on her knee, most parents would not expect her to do her chores that afternoon. When a parent always feels badly or guilty about their child's experiences, permissive behavior becomes a pattern.

Now, I'm going to read a story about a Mom who finds it difficult to set limits with her son because she blames herself for the violence he witnessed.

Yolanda's Story

Yolanda and her husband Rafael have been together for 12 years. He has been physically and verbally abusive to her. Several times, he has pushed or slapped her in front of their son David, who is 10. She sees David getting into trouble in school and feels guilty about it. She feels that she is to blame for the problems in her family. Yolanda is expecting a visit from her aunt and uncle in a half hour. David left several of his toys and some clothes on the living room floor. She asks him to pick up his things and put them in his room. He ignores her. She asks him again. He says, "You do it! That's your job. I'm busy. Why are you bothering me?" She wants to tell him to cooperate with her, but she thinks about all the things he's been through, and thinks she shouldn't start a fight. He goes out the door to play with a friend. Yolanda shakes her head and picks up the toys. David is talking to her exactly the way his Dad does.

How did Yolanda's feeling of responsibility for the violence affect her ability to set limits with David about cleaning up his stuff?

Why do you think that David is acting that way?

Ask class: What might David learn from the fact that Yolanda didn't respond as a parent when he spoke disrespectfully, ignored her request to pick up his things, and walked out the door?

How would this interaction affect Yolanda's feelings for David?

Getting Rid of Self-Blame

Tell class: Like Yolanda, many Moms who have been battered accept their children's abusive actions towards them, because they blame themselves for the violence. If we can get rid of this self-blame, we can do a better job of setting limits with our children, and have a better parenting relationship with them.

The first step is becoming aware of the self-blaming thoughts we have.

Have class turn to page 6-4 of their workbooks and fill in the blanks as you do this exercise.)

Ask class: What are some examples of self-blaming thoughts?

List examples on the board, including:

- I should have left him sooner
- I should have just kept my mouth shut
- I shouldn't have upset him
- If I were a good Mom I would have stayed with him

- How could I have put my kids through that?
- My kids are hurt because of the violence and it's my fault

Ask class: What are the feelings you have when you blame yourself?

List examples on the board, including:

- Guilty
- Hopeless
- Inadequate

Ask class: What are some more positive or realistic thoughts that you could say to yourself instead?

List examples on the board, including:

- I did the best I could at the time.
- The violence was never my fault.
- My husband/partner is responsible for his own behavior and there's nothing I can do or could have done to change it.
- My kids are hurt because of the violence, but I did everything I could to protect them.

Ask class for more examples.

Self-Blame: How it Can Affect Parenting

Tell class that we will be doing this exercise for homework. Review it briefly, using Yolanda's story as an example.

Think of a situation where you were overly permissive with your child because you blamed yourself for the violence.

1. Briefly describe the situation. *I was expecting my family to visit. My son David left a mess in the living room. I asked him to pick it up, and he told me not to bother him and went out the door.*
2. What were the self-blaming or negative thoughts you had? *If I'd left his Dad when I should have, he wouldn't be acting like this. I don't know what to do with that boy.*
3. What were your feelings? *Helpless, hopeless, powerless as a mom, guilty for the violence.*
4. How did these thoughts and feelings affect your behavior with your child? *I felt there was no point in arguing. I didn't want to be hard on him, so I just let him go.*

5. What are some more positive or realistic thoughts you could say to yourself? About the violence: *I left his Dad when I was able to.* About your rights to set limits with your child: *I have the right to expect him to cooperate, and to be responsible for picking up after himself.*
6. What limits would you have wanted to set with your child? *To speak to me respectfully, and to pick up after himself before he goes out.*

Ask class to do the worksheet on page 6-5 with a situation of their own for homework.

Establishing Leadership with Your Children

Usually when we blame ourselves and act overly permissive with our kids, our intentions are good. We want to compensate for the fact that our kids have been through so much. But when we don't set any limits with our kids, or we let them act disrespectfully, we are not helping them.

When we fail to set limits, we may get angry and resentful at our kids for the way they act. We find ourselves getting "fed-up" and we may become too punitive.

When we are inconsistent in limit-setting, kids become confused. They learn that they don't have to respect limits or be responsible for their behavior. They may have learned from Dad that being abusive to family members is acceptable, and helps you get your way.

Many parents use physical punishment (spankings, whippings, slaps, etc.) to try to set limits with their children. For children who have witnessed DV, physical punishment can be damaging.

Physical Punishment in Families Who Have Experienced DV

Most children find spankings or whippings humiliating, and sometimes physically painful. But for children who have seen their Mom get physically hurt by their Dad, physical punishment can have a whole different meaning. Think of the effects of domestic violence on children that we talked about early on in this class.

Ask class: If you are a child who has seen or heard your Dad hit your Mom, and your Mom got a black eye, or bruises, or other injuries, how would you feel when your Dad whipped or spanked you? What would you be afraid of?

Generate a list on the board, including:

- Afraid of your Dad
- Afraid you will get hurt
- Afraid that no one can protect you
- Afraid that your Mom will get hurt if she tries to stop your Dad
- Afraid that when you get spanked you will get hurt

If you were a child who saw your Dad get your Mom to "obey" him by hitting her, and then your Mom got you to "obey" her by hitting you, what lessons would you learn?

Examples:

- Dad hits Mom and me, and Mom hits me, so hitting is the best way to get people to do what you want.
- People who are bigger and stronger have the right to hit people who are smaller and weaker to make them obey.
- It's OK to hit or to be hit by someone you love.

Tell class:

There is another very damaging lesson that children learn when they witness DV and are punished physically by their parents: Whenever I hit someone, it is the other person's fault.

For example, a boy sees his Dad slap his Mom. Then he hears Dad tell Mom, "You shouldn't provoke me like that. You really asked for it." Later in the day, his Mom gets mad at him for jumping on the bed. She spansks him and says, "If you didn't jump on the bed like that, I wouldn't have to hit you. You know you're not supposed to do that."

This boy is learning from the two most important people in his life that people get hit because they deserve to be hit. He is learning that the person who hits is *not* responsible for hitting.

- What do you think this boy would do when his little sister takes his cookie and eats it?
- What reason would he give for hitting her?
- What do you think this boy would do when his friend at school calls him "Stupid?"
- Who would he blame?

Kids tend to think this way anyway, but the negative lesson that "I am not responsible for my bad behavior" is strongly reinforced when a child witnesses DV and experiences physical punishment. They are more likely than children who never experience violence to carry this thinking into their adult relationships.

In the next few sessions, we will be learning positive ways to set limits with our kids. These include

- Establishing consequences
- Listening
- Problem-solving
- Conflict prevention

In order to use these skills, it is important to commit to sticking to some basic rules with your kids. Everyone sets rules, but we need to respond to our kids every time they don't follow them.

Tell the class to fill in the worksheet on page 6-7. Ask the class: What are the most important rules in your home?

Examples:

- No yelling
- No hitting
- No namecalling or putdowns
- When a child is too upset to follow the rules, he or she needs to go to a different part of the house (separation)

Go back over each rule and ask the class to phrase the rule in a positive way by telling the child what he or she *cando*.

Examples:

- Use words instead of hitting.
- Use a low tone of voice.
- Tell the child what you are upset about instead of putting them down or name calling.

Letting Your Children Discuss Their Dad at Home

Tell class: Many of the women who are in this program are separated or divorced from their batterer, or are considering separation or divorce. While many of us don't want to have anything more to do with the man who battered us, we are still in a parenting relationship with this person. Our kids have experienced the impact of DV, and need support and reassurance from us.

Have class fill in worksheet on page 6-8.

As difficult as it is, we can help our kids by:

- Not speaking negatively about their Dad as a person, although we can and should say that their abusive behavior was wrong
- Finding one or two positive things to say about him to our kids
- Making visitation as safe and predictable as possible for them

Ask class to think of other ways. Have them continue filling in their worksheet. Children often define themselves as "like my Mom," AND "like my Dad." When parents separate or divorce,

children may feel split in two. What are some of the other things kids experience when their parents separate or divorce?

Ask class to generate a list. It helps to make some rules for ourselves about how we're going to act around visitation. Sometimes we may not want our children to see their Dads, but if that is the arrangement, we need to find other supportive adults to talk to about our feelings.

Here are some guidelines:

Issues you can discuss with your child about visitation

- When and where their Dad will see them next
- Plans for the next visit
- Anything positive about their father as a parent (Example: Your Dad cares about you.)
- Your child's feelings about the separation or divorce
- Positive interest in other relatives or family friends that your child sees (for example, "How's your grandma doing?")
- Safety planning

Issues you should not discuss with your child

- Arrangements for child support
- Anger, resentment, frustration with their Dad
- Questions about who their Dad is seeing, where he is working, anything he is doing that is NOT related to your child's regular activities
- Any feelings you have for their Dad outside the parenting relationship (except related to safety)
- Your feelings for his new partner

Strengthening Your Support System

Tell class: Isolation is a tactic that many batterers use to control their partners. Many women who have been battered find themselves cut off from family and friends, from coworkers and neighbors. Think of ways you've been isolated.

We can do a better job of helping our kids when we feel strong and supported ourselves.

Support comes in many forms: people we can talk to; family members and friends who can help with our kids; counseling or women's groups where we can share experiences of being battered,

and share our struggles of coparenting with a man who has abused us; drug/alcohol programs where we can get help for chemical dependency.

There are many obstacles to asking for support from others.

Ask class: What are some of the obstacles to asking for emotional support or practical help from other people?

Generate a list and write it on the board: Examples:

- I'm embarrassed
- I don't like to bother people
- I think I should be able to take care of things myself
- I don't have anyone to ask

Homework:

1. Ask class to fill out "Strengthening Your Support System" on page 6-9.
2. Have them also complete "Self-Blame: How it Affects Your Parenting" on page 6-5 (as discussed earlier).

Strengthening Your Support System What are some of the obstacles you have to asking for emotional support or practical help from other people?

What are some things you would like support with? (Examples: job training, funding for school, women's support group, childcare)

Who are some people or organizations who could support you?

Session 6: Respectful Parenting With Your Children's Mom

Objectives

1. To help men who have been abusive to define and practice respectful behaviors with their children's Mom
2. To understand and be accountable for the ways they have used their children to control their partners
3. To help them find ways to behave respectfully towards their children during visitation
4. To learn to handle parenting conflicts respectfully

Lesson Plan

1. Homework review
2. What is respectful parenting?
3. Understanding the use of children as a tactic of control
4. Guidelines for Dads who are separated or divorced
5. Guidelines for safe visitation
6. Handling parenting conflicts

Respectful Parenting

Refer to page 6-2 of student workbook, where students can write down ideas as they are discussed. Ask class: What does it mean to have a respectful parenting relationship?

- Showing respect to the other as a parent
- Valuing and honoring the other parent's needs
- Sharing decision-making about raising the children
- Supporting the other parent in front of the children, even if you disagree with her decision
- Discussing disagreements about parenting in a respectful way, and only when the children are not present
- Agreeing on shared goals for children
- Agreeing or compromising/negotiating about the care and discipline of children
- Resolving problems in a respectful, non-violent ways

What are some of the ways you show respect to your children's Mom?

Understanding the Use of Children as a Tactic of Control

A person who uses violence as a way to control his partner often uses the children to try to control or manipulate the children's mother. While many men who batter are good fathers in a lot of ways, they may use the children to gain or keep control over their kids' Mom. Again, using your children as a way to control their Mom is not compatible with good parenting.

Refer to page 6-3 of student workbook, where they can write down ideas as they are discussed. Ask class: What are some other ways that men use their children against their children's mother?

Reassure class that you know that some women may use children against their children's father, but we are addressing men in this session. Write a list on the board and include:

- Criticizing mother in front of the children
- Changing the rules for the children to make her look bad
- Getting children to take his side against her
- Questioning children about mother's activities
- Yelling at the mother when the kids misbehave
- Blaming her for separation or divorce
- Telling them that she is crazy, or a drunk, or an addict, etc.
- Getting other family members to speak badly about her to the kids
- Intentionally withholding money for the children's needs
- Using visitation as a way to control/harass her
- Making her responsible for discipline and then blaming her when the kids misbehave
- Teaching the children to put her down and call her names
- Making her responsible for taking care of all the children's needs, and then blaming her when not all their needs are met

Tell class: Let's look at some specific examples of how men who are abusive use the children to control their partners. Charles talked about how he used his son, Mike, to humiliate his wife, Gloria. Charles broke down the door to their home because Gloria had changed the looks after Charles tried to choke her. Soon after that he moved back in.

Charles's Story

My wife, Gloria, never went past the eighth grade, and she can barely read or write. I would use that against her in different ways. Our son, Mike, is eleven, and has some trouble in school. When I got home from work at night, I would get a beer, put my feet up and watch TV. Whenever Mike would ask me for help with his homework, I'd tell him, "Leave me alone, I'm busy. Go ask your Mom." I would know how to help him, but then I'd make him go to his Mom and ask her for help with a math problem or something, and she'd tell him she couldn't help. Then he'd get all upset and come back to me for help. I would tell him that his Mom was stupid or that she didn't care how he did in school. If he complained to me about it, I would accuse him of being disrespectful and punish him in front of her.

Ask class:

- What did Charles do that was controlling?
- What did he want to have happen?
- What do you think was the impact of his actions on Gloria?
- On Mike?
- What do you think Mike learned from his Dad?

Tell class: We are going to take some time to fill out a control log on ways you may have used your children against their Mom.

Go around the room and ask for examples. Then tell class to fill out the control log that is in their workbook on page 6-5. After everyone has finished, spend some time talking about the responses.

Control Log

Think of a situation where you used the children as a way to control your partner.

1. Briefly describe the situation, and what you did (what you said, gestures you used, physical action, tone of voice, and facial expressions).
2. What did you want to have happen in this situation?
3. What beliefs do you have that supported your actions and intentions?
4. What feelings were you having?
5. How did your children experience the situation?
6. What was the impact of your action?
 - On you:
 - On your partner:
 - On your children:
7. How did your behavior affect your relationship with your children?
8. What could you have done differently?

(Adapted from the DAIP Manual.)

Guidelines for Dads Who Are Separated or Divorced

Many of the men who are in this program are separated or divorced from their children's Mom, or are considering separation or divorce. While many of us don't want to have anything more to do with our former partners, we are still in a parenting relationship with this person. Our kids have experienced the impact of DV, and need support and reassurance from us. As difficult as it is, we can help our kids by

- Not speaking badly about their Mom
- Finding one or two positive things to say about her to our kids
- Making visitation as safe and predictable as possible for them

Children often define themselves as "like my Mom," AND "like my Dad." When parents separate or divorce, children may feel split in two. What are some of the other things kids experience when their parents separate or divorce?

Ask class to generate a list. Include:

- Change of schools
- Change of home
- Loss of friends
- Confusion about what's going on
- Feeling that they need to take sides
- Anxiety about what's going to happen

Some Guidelines for Visitation

Tell class: Visitation with our children can be very difficult and sometimes painful. For a lot of people, it brings up all kinds of feelings about their former marriage or relationship. These feelings can include anger, grief, loss, guilt, resentment, and many other bad feelings.

Unfortunately, many parents use visitation as an opportunity to try to work out these difficult feelings. But it is NOT the responsibility of young children to make their parents feel better about divorce or separation.

It helps to make some rules for ourselves about how we're going to act around visitation.

Here are some guidelines.

Refer the class to page 6-6 in student workbook.

Planning for safe visitation

If you are very angry at your children's Mom, or feel that you are at risk for being abusive to her, it is VERY IMPORTANT to plan ahead so that your children are not hurt or scared by your feelings or behavior.

- Arrange for supervised visitation, or ask a friend or family member who knows your children to pick the kids up and take them back to their Mom.
- Prepare for the visit by discussing your angry feelings with someone other than your children or their mother, for example, a counselor, a sponsor, or a close friend.
- Make a rule for yourself that you will NOT use your children as a way to hurt or control their Mom. Using them in this way will not help the children, or your relationship with them.

Use the following guidelines to keep your conversation with your children safe and appropriate.

Issues you can discuss with your child about visitation

- When and where you will see them next
- Plans for the next visit
- Anything positive about their mother as a parent (Example: Your Mom cares about you)
- Your child's feelings about the separation or divorce
- **Positive** interest in other relatives or family friends that your child sees (Example, "How's your grandma doing?")

Issues you should not discuss with your child

- Arrangements for child support
- Anger, resentment, frustration with their Mom
- Questions about who their Mom is seeing, where she lives, where she works, her phone number or address, anything she is doing that is NOT related to your child's regular activities
- Any feelings you have for their Mom outside the parenting relationship
- Your feelings for her new partner

Handling Parenting Conflicts

Tell class: To create and maintain a healthy environment for kids, it's important to be able to resolve conflicts with their Mom in a respectful way. Kids learn about how to solve problems from watching their parents.

We are going to discuss some steps for handling parenting conflict. These steps should only be used when there is a safe, trusting, non-violent, parenting relationship.

If your children's Mom does NOT want to have contact with you, or does not want to discuss any parenting issues with you, it is important to respect her needs. If you have different rules for the children, and cannot discuss these, your children will adapt. It is better for them to deal with two different sets of rules in different households than to see their Mom fearful again, or to witness conflict between their parents.

Have class turn to page 6-8 of student workbook, "Handling Parenting Conflicts." Tell the class they will be doing this exercise for homework. First, go through the exercise with some examples.

Let's look at Ken's description of a parenting conflict that he has with his wife, Rose. Included in this exercise are some ideas for solving conflict about parenting. We will discuss those in more detail after we go through the example.

Example: *Our son Jason wants to stay up past his bedtime to watch TV. Rose lets him stay up, and I don't think it's right.*

1. What is your experience of the conflict? *Jason's Mom spoils him.*
2. What is her experience of the conflict? *She doesn't think it's a big deal. She thinks I'm too strict.*
3. What is the actual conflict? *We disagree on when Jason should go to bed.*
4. How do you think your children experience it? *Confusing.*
5. What usually happens when you argue about it? *We yell at each other.*
6. What are some of the negative thoughts you have about her? *If it were up to her, she would let Jason run wild.*
7. What is a more respectful or positive thought you could have about her? *She is a good mother. Some of her ideas about parenting are different from mine.*
8. What would be a good time and place to initiate a discussion about it with their Mom? *On Saturday afternoon, when Jason is at his friend's house and we are both relaxed.*

9. What agreement or compromise might work for both of you? *Jason could stay up late on Fridays and Saturdays, but needs to be in bed by 9:00 p.m. on school nights. In the summer, he could have an extra "late" night.*

10. Who is going to tell Jason about the new rule, and what will be said? *We will tell Jason about it together. We will let him know that we talked about it and decided together that it was important for him to get a good sleep on school nights, but fine if he wants to stay up later on other nights.*

11. What is your back-up plan if the new rule doesn't work out? *We will find a good time to talk about it again, when Jason isn't around.*

Have class turn to page 6-9 in student workbook and review "Guidelines for Handling Parenting Conflicts."

Guidelines for Handling Parenting Conflicts

1. Be sure you feel calm and safe before you bring it up at all. Take a time-out or some time to think about the problem, before you discuss it with your partner.
2. Talk about it when the children are not present or are not able to hear the conversation. Talk about it when you are both calm enough to make a good decision together.
3. Speak respectfully about your own position. DO NOT criticize, put-down, blame, or try to coerce your partner.
4. Listen carefully and respectfully to her. Make sure to listen to what she's saying, and acknowledge her position. Try to hear her perspective, and don't think about who is "right" or "wrong."
5. Work together to negotiate an agreement or compromise.
6. Agree on what you are going to say to your children. If you and your partner live together, it's important that you both tell them the rule or agreement.
7. Work out a back-up plan: What are you going to do if your new rule or agreement doesn't work out?

If there is time, ask class for one or two examples of parenting conflicts. Write the conflict down on the board, and discuss possible compromises.

Example: Darrin is a vegetarian and does not want the children eating meat. Lisa eats everything, and thinks that meat is an important source of protein for the kids. Darrin and Lisa don't live together but have a friendly and supportive parenting relationship.

Possible compromises: Remember, both people have to agree on the compromise.

1. When the children are at Darrin's they eat vegetarian food only. When they are at Lisa's they eat whatever she cooks for them.

2. Let the kids choose how they want to eat.
3. If both parents are willing, they can choose to agree to both provide the same kinds of food to the children and either feed the children vegetarian food only (and find other sources of protein), or feed the children meat and vegetables.

Example: Greg thinks the kids should have some time to play when they get home from school. Marsha thinks they should get their homework done right away, and then play if they have time.

Possible compromises:

1. Let the kids play first on alternate days of the week. (Homework first on Monday and Wednesday, play first on Tuesday and Thursday).
2. Let them play first for a week to try it, and see if they get their homework done afterwards. Then decide.
3. Have them do their homework first on nights before a test, or if they have a special project due. Let them play first on other nights.

Homework

Refer to page 6-10 of student workbook. Tell the class: Think of a conflict you have now or have had in the past with your children's mother and answer the following questions.

1. What is your experience of the conflict?
2. What is your children's Mom's experience of the conflict?
3. How do you think your children experience it?
4. What is the actual conflict?
5. What usually happens when you argue about it?
6. What are some of the negative thoughts you have about her?
7. How might you change these to more positive thoughts?
8. What would be a good time and place to initiate a discussion about it with your child's Mom?
9. What agreement or compromise might work for both of you?
10. Who is going to tell your child or children about the new rule, and what will be said?
11. What is your back-up plan if the new rule doesn't work out?

As you go through the questions, review "Guidelines for Handling Parenting Conflicts" on page 6-9 of the student workbook.

Session 7: Respectful Parenting

Objectives:

1. To help parents to broaden their definition of "discipline" beyond punishment or reward
2. To introduce a model for respectful parenting

Lesson Plan

- Definition of "respect"
- Styles of parenting
- Practicing respectful communication

What is Respect?

Tell class that we're going to be talking about respectful parenting. Start with some discussion questions:

- How do you define respect? (Note: for this curriculum, we do **not** define respect as fear)
- Think of one person you respect. How did that person earn your respect? How do you act towards them?
- Think of one person who respects you. How does that person act towards you?
- What does respect from kids mean?
- How is respect different from fear?
- Do you think that parents should respect their children?
- How should parents show respect to their children?
- Is respect between parents and children different than respect between two adults? In what ways?

Please remember this as we define respectful parenting: We understand that many people in the class were raised by parents who loved them, and also spanked, whipped, belted, and yelled at them. Many participants are raising their children the same way. Make it clear to the class that it is not our intention to condemn these parents in any way.

Our goal is to help parents learn new skills, and learn to have more choices in how to discipline their children.

Ask class: How were you disciplined as a child?

Generate a list on the board. The list will probably include a lot of spanking, whipping, scolding, restriction, etc. Have class turn to page 7-2 of their workbooks. Write titles for two columns on the board.

- Punishment/Child's Feeling
- Encouragement/Child's Feeling

Ask the class the following questions and write down their answers in the columns on the board:

- How were you punished as a child?
- How did that feel?
- How were you encouraged as a child?
- How did that feel?

Keep these up on the board for use later. *Ask class:* What does discipline mean?

Listen for different answers. Tell class: A lot of people believe that discipline means that your child must experience some form of pain. But discipline doesn't have to be about the child experiencing pain.

Discipline as Guidance

Tell class that the true definition of discipline is to teach or to guide. Ask them turn to page 7-3 of their workbooks. Ask class: What are the qualities of a really good teacher?

Generate a list of responses. The list could include:

- Fair
- Good listener
- Pays attention to you
- Cares about you
- Has clear rules and expectations
- Inspires you to learn

- Encourages you
- Tells you when you are doing well
- Guides you to find answers for yourself
- Never puts you down or humiliates you
- Never labels anyone
- Solves problems with you
- Respects all students, even those who behave "badly"
- Has confidence in you
- Doesn't compare you with others

How does this help you to learn?

Ask class: Do you think that a good parent has the same qualities? What are the qualities of a really bad teacher?

- Unfair
- Unpredictable
- Inconsistent
- Can't control the class
- Has unclear expectations
- Easily manipulated by some students
- Doesn't listen
- Blames you when you do poorly
- Labels you as "dumb," etc.
- Has no confidence in your ability to learn
- Picks favorites
- Criticizes and humiliates you
- Never gives reasons for what he or she is telling you to do (Just do it because I said so)

- Uses threats to keep class in line

Think carefully about this list.

Ask class: How does this keep you from learning?

Now go back to the list of feelings that was generated earlier. Tell class: Let's go back and look at how you feel when you've been punished. How does that affect your ability to learn or cooperate? Now, let's look at how you feel when you've been encouraged. How does that affect your ability to learn/cooperate? What do you think is the main difference between a good teacher and a bad teacher?

Explain the following to the class: As parents, we often act as though we are on a teeter-totter, being too permissive, and then teetering to the opposite extreme of being too punitive. When we are permissive, we don't set clear limits with our children. Then they "misbehave," and we teeter to the other extreme of being too demanding, threatening, and punitive.

We may find ourselves in a cycle in which we feel guilty for being too hard on our children and therefore teeter toward permissiveness. Then we may not follow through on limits we set, until we get "fed-up" and teeter back in the direction of being too punitive. In this way, the teeter-totter goes back and forth.

In many parenting relationships, one parent is more punitive, and the other tries to compensate by being more permissive. When there is domestic violence in a family, parents may go to extremes. The abusive partner may be very punitive and controlling towards the children, and the abused parent may be very permissive with them to try to compensate for her partner's punitive behavior.

In other situations, the abusive partner may not contribute to disciplining the children at all, but may set up situations that put his children's Mom in the position of being the "bad guy." He can then criticize her for being a bad mother, or being "too hard" on the kids.

All these situations can be confusing and destructive for children. That is why it is important for parents to learn and use respectful parenting techniques.

Every parent operates from the permissive or punitive extreme at different times. Some parents tend to have a style of parenting that is consistently more permissive or more punitive. Respectful parenting is a third style of parenting, which we can think of as a balance. A respectful parent balances

- Structure and flexibility
- Teaching and learning
- The parent's needs with the child's needs
- Leadership with negotiation

- Talking and listening

Ask class to turn to "Three Ways of Parenting" on page 7-4 of their workbooks. Explain the three ways of parenting.

Three Styles of Parenting

Mutual Respect Based on mutual cooperation:

- Both parent and child are respected.
- Parent communicates limits respectfully.
- Parent follows through consistently with limits set.
- Parent values child's ideas and feelings.
- Child is involved in solving problems.
- Negotiation and fairness are part of discipline.
- Parent communicates assertively.

Punitive Based on power over child:

- Child is not respected.
- Parent uses power over child.
- Parent uses threats and punishment to control.
- Parent does not consider child's ideas and feelings.
- No negotiation or flexibility.
- Parent communicates aggressively.

Permissive Based on parent's desire to avoid conflict:

- Parent is not respected
- Limits not clear or consistent
- Parent doesn't follow through on limits set
- Child not given responsibilities for self
- Parent "gives in"

- Child pampered
- Parent communicates passively

Styles of Parenting

The style of parenting that we use with our kids is demonstrated by the way we communicate with them, especially when we're upset or trying to set limits with them.

In the examples above, we looked at punitive, permissive, and respectful communication. Most people use all three of these styles at times, with our partners, our friends, our coworkers, and our kids.

Tell class: Now we're going to look at a situation where a child has failed to do his chores. Let's look at the different ways his Mom could respond.

Ask class to turn to page 7-6 of workbook. Read the following example to the class: It's Saturday morning. Twelve-year-old Ben has plans to play basketball with his friends after breakfast. His Saturday morning chores are to clean his room and wash the breakfast dishes. The family rule is that Ben has to do his chores before he can go out. When his Mom comes back from grocery shopping, she meets Ben going out the door to play basketball. She sees dirty dishes in the sink.

Punitive Style: Mom says: "You get back in this house right now and do those dishes. Can't I get any help around here? You are useless."

Ask class:

- What style of parenting is the Mom using?
- How would Ben feel?

Permissive Style: Mom says: "I was hoping you would do your chores first. But go on, I'll do them so you won't be late for your game."

Ask class:

- What style of parenting is the Mom using?
- How would Ben feel?

Respectful Style: Mom says: "I see dirty dishes in the sink. We had an agreement that you would do your chores before playing basketball. If you want to go play basketball, you'll have to finish your chores first."

Ask class:

- What style of parenting is the Mom using?

- How would Ben feel?

Ask class to turn to page 7-7 and then tell them: Let's look at another example.

Katie and her Dad are out at the mall. It's almost dinner time, and they are planning to get chicken for dinner. Katie sees an ice cream stand and says, "I want ice cream!" Her Dad tells her, "No, you have to wait until after dinner." She starts whining loudly, and saying over and over again, "I WANT ICE CREAM! NOW!"

There are a few different ways that parents might respond to Katie. Let's look at them.

Punitive style: Dad tells Katie again that she can't have ice cream until after dinner. She continues to demand it. Dad says, "You better quit whining or you won't get any ice cream EVER!" Katie says, "I want some ice cream NOW!" Dad raises his voice and says, "Did you hear what I said? If you don't quit whining you're going to get it!" Katie starts to cry.

Permissive style: Dad sighs and says, "Oh, all right!" He takes Katie into the ice cream stand and buys her a cone.

Respectful style: Dad says, "I know you really want some ice cream now. But we need to eat dinner first." Katie says, "WHY? I want ice cream NOW." Dad says, "Ice cream tastes really good, but we need to eat dinner first. We can get ice cream after dinner." Katie keeps whining. Dad takes her to get chicken for dinner.

Ask class, and take some time to discuss: Which style of communicating do you tend to use most often?

Respectful Communication

Tell class: Now we're going to spend some time talking about respectful communication.

Most of us don't think too much about how we communicate, unless we are required to for our work, etc. Let's look more closely at different ways of communicating. Learning respectful communication is helpful not only in our relationships with our kids, but in all aspects of our lives. We are now going to talk about four different styles of communication. Most people tend to use each of these styles at times.

Refer the class to page 7-8 in their workbooks. Read each style of communication

Assertive Style

In assertive communication, the person stands up for their personal rights, and expresses their thoughts, feelings, and beliefs directly, honestly, and **respectfully**.

The assertive communicator does not dominate, humiliate, or degrade the other person.

Goal: To honestly state your feelings, and show respect for the other person's position.

Messages: Both of our feelings and needs are important. I am telling you what I need, and I'm also willing to listen to your needs.

Aggressive Style

In aggressive communication, the person expresses their feelings in a way that violates the rights of another person. The aggressive communicator uses humiliation, sarcasm, insults, or threats to get their point across.

Goal: To dominate the situation and win at the other person's expense.

Messages: I'm right and you're wrong. Your feelings are not important. I don't need to listen to what you have to say. My view is the only one that matters.

Passive-Aggressive Style

A person communicating in a passive-aggressive style uses more hidden forms of aggression to express their feelings. The strategy is to give the other person a message without actually coming out and saying it directly.

Goal: To dominate the situation and win at the other person's expense

Passive Style

A person communicating in a passive or non-assertive style does not say what they are feeling. The passive person gives in to other people's requests, demands, or feelings and does not acknowledge their own feelings or say what they want. When the person does express feelings, it is usually in an apologetic or timid way, so that it's easy for other people to ignore them.

Goal: To play it safe, not rock the boat, and avoid conflict at all costs

Messages: I don't count; what I need is not important; you don't have to take my feelings into account.

Note: A person who has been abused by her husband or partner may have to be passive in her style of communication in order to try to stay safe.

Adapted from Arthur J. Lange and Patricia Kubowski.

Tell class: Assertive communication is the foundation of respectful parenting. The parenting skills you will be learning in the following sessions are most effective when assertive communication is used.

Homework

Tell class to do the following for homework: 1. Describe a situation where you had a punitive or permissive style of parenting. Think about how you could have responded to your child in a respectful/assertive way. (See page 7-10 in student workbook.)

Session 8: Handling Anger as a Parent

Objectives:

1. To clarify the difference between anger and violence
2. To help parents handle their anger towards their children in non-violent ways

Lesson Plan:

- Homework review
- The difference between anger and abuse/violence
- Separating anger at your kids' father or mother from anger at your kids
- Beliefs and thoughts that support respectful parenting
- Time-Out for parents

Homework Review:

Have parents share situations where they used punitive or permissive parenting with their children.

The Difference Between Anger and Abuse/Violence

Refer to page 8-2 in the Student Workbook and discuss the following: Anger is a normal emotion. It does not have to be expressed abusively. Abuse is behavior or words that are hurtful or intentionally disrespectful to another person. In earlier classes we talked about different forms of abuse.

Tell class: Children who grow up with domestic violence need to learn that a person can be angry without being abusive. Otherwise, when the child becomes angry he or she may respond one of two ways:

- Act violently or aggressively whenever he or she is angry
- Never express the anger at all because he or she is afraid of what will happen.

In order to help our kids express anger in healthy ways, we need to learn how to understand our own anger and express it nonviolently.

When we're angry at our kids' mom or dad we sometimes take it out on our kids

Tell class: Sometimes, when a parent is angry at their child's Mom or Dad, they take it out on the child. This happens a lot in families where there has been domestic violence. It's important to understand how you may confuse anger at your child's other parent with anger at your child.

Read the following stories to the class, and then discuss using the questions that follow each story:

Keith's Story

Just after my wife and I had separated, my daughter Tina was visiting me. I was pretty depressed about our marriage ending, and I'd lost my job, too. Tina is 9. She came over and we got all her toys and started playing. Then she pulled out all my magazines and spread them out on the floor. She was trying on my shirts and piling them up on the floor. I asked her to clean up before we had lunch. She didn't. Just before it was time to bring her back to her Grandma's, I asked her again to help me clean up. She was watching TV, and she just wouldn't get up. When I told her to hurry because it was time to go she said, "Leave me alone. I'm tired." I went over to her and got in her face. I yelled at her and told her "You're lazy, just like your mother." She started crying. Afterwards, I felt really bad about it.

Discussion questions:

- How did Keith feel towards Tina?
- How do you think he felt towards Tina's Mom?
- How did his feelings for Tina's Mom affect the way he acted toward Tina?
- Was he abusive?
- Remember that Keith has hit Tina's Mom in the past. How would Tina feel when Keith yelled at her?
- How could Keith have used respectful parenting skills to get Tina to clean up?

Denise's Story

Saturday morning is the one day when my kids' Dad, David, is usually around to help out. The rest of the week, he's working. One Saturday, I was looking forward to having a little time to myself. And also I know the kids like to see him. At breakfast, he said he was going to help his friend work on his car. It would probably take him most of the day. Well, I didn't say anything to him, because I was in no mood to start a fight. So he left. I poured a glass of juice for my son, Andre, who's 3. I told him to be careful. He was taking it out to the living room and he spilled it all over my carpet. I yelled at him, smacked him, and put him in his room. I surprised myself that day. Usually, I don't get that upset when one of my kids spills something.

Discussion questions:

- How did Denise feel toward Andre?

- How do you think she felt about David?
- How did her feelings for David affect the way she acted with Andre?
- Was she abusive?
- How could Denise have used respectful parenting skills to tell Andre she was upset?
- How would the fact that David has been abusive to her make it more difficult for her to separate her anger at Andre from her anger at David?

Tell class: It's important to recognize when you are confusing your anger at your child's other parent with anger at your child.

Separating Anger At Your Partner From Anger at Your Child

Review page 8-5 of the student workbook with the class.

1. Ask yourself, "What am I really angry about?"
2. Decide who you need to talk to about your anger. When there has been violence in your relationship, it may not be possible or appropriate to talk to your partner or spouse about your anger towards them. However, it is very important not to take out your bad feelings on your child.
3. If you decide you are angry at your husband, wife, or partner, and NOT your child, try to find someone else to talk to, for example, a close friend or family member, or a counselor. Also, you can try to find something else to do to deal with your anger. In a few minutes we will talk about taking Time-Out.

Sometimes we are angry at our partners **and** our children. Before we talk to our children about it, we should carefully sort out what we need to tell them.

Optional Small Group Exercise

Break the class into small groups and ask them to talk about a time that they were angry at their child's other parent and took their anger out on their child. Ask the class to turn to page 8-6 in their workbooks and answer the following questions:

- What was the situation?
- What were you angry about?
- What did you say/do to your child?
- How do you think your child felt?

- How did you feel afterwards?
- Who else could you have talked to?
- What else could you have done?

Come back to the large group. Ask for a couple of volunteers to share their stories. Focus on sorting out anger at others versus anger at children. Beliefs and thoughts that support respectful parenting All children misbehave sometimes. By learning to recognize the things inside of us that make us angry, we can better control our anger, and be more respectful in our discipline of our kids.

Ask class to turn to page 8-7 in their workbooks and go over the following: In order to be more respectful to our kids, it helps to look at two things:

- The beliefs we have about how parents should act and how kids should act
- The way we describe our kids' behavior to ourselves in our thoughts.

Beliefs that support disrespectful parenting

Some of the beliefs we have about parenting can influence us to be disrespectful to our children. Here are some examples:

- Parents should be able to control their kids.
- Children should always obey their parents.
- Children should never talk back.
- A parent whose child misbehaves in public is a bad parent.
- Good parents always keep their children neat and clean.
- When kids misbehave, they're just trying to "get" their parents.
- Kids should know better than to misbehave.
- Children are responsible for their parents' feelings.
- Bad kids deserve what they get.
- Children should be quiet and just listen.

Ask class: Which if any of these beliefs do you have?

Ask participants to write ideas in their workbooks on page 8-7, and then ask for volunteers to share their answers.

Negative Thoughts

Negative thoughts make us feel bad about our kids, and bad about ourselves as parents. These feelings often turn into anger. Positive thoughts help us have a better/more realistic attitude and feel calmer.

The class can follow along in their workbooks on page 8-8 as you discuss the following: Our own negative thoughts about our kids cause us to get angry, frustrated, indignant, and enraged, and give us justification to be punitive to our kids. Negative thoughts about our kids include thinking about how "bad" they are, how "ungrateful" they are, etc.

Write the following examples of negative thoughts on the board and discuss. Ask class to add more examples of negative thoughts:

- He's doing this deliberately to make me mad.
- He's spoiled.
- She's so selfish.
- I should be able to control him.
- She is really asking for it.
- He's not going to get away with this.

Tell class: We can learn to control our feelings and behavior better by

1. Recognizing our negative thoughts
2. Deliberately stopping them
3. Replacing the negative thoughts with thoughts that help us to feel calmer. We call these self-calming thoughts.

Karen's Story

Karen is at the check-out line at the grocery store with her 3-year-old daughter, Jessica. Karen and Jessica are both tired and hungry. Jessica picks up a candy bar and demands that Karen buy it for her. Karen says, "No, we're not buying that." Jessica asks for it a few more times. Then she starts crying and yelling, "I want it. I want CANDY. Get it for me, Mommy. I want CANDY!" Everyone else at the check-out lines is watching Karen and Jessica. Karen pays for her groceries, yanks Jessica by the arm, pulls her out to the car and swats her on the butt. She says, "You be quiet right now, or you're really going to get a spanking." She puts her roughly into the car seat. Jessica cries all the way home.

Ask class:

- What do you think are some of Karen's beliefs about parenting might be?
- What are some of her negative thoughts?
- How is Karen feeling about Jessica and about herself as a Mom?
- How might she have acted differently if she had different beliefs about parenting?
- How could Karen change some of her negative thoughts to help herself calm down, and to talk to Jessica in a way that is more respectful?

Note to instructor: At this point, DO NOT get sidetracked in a discussion of how Karen should discipline her child. It is important to stay focused on how she is THINKING and FEELING. Refer the class to page 8-9 of their workbooks. Write the following on the board and ask class to think of more examples.

Beliefs that support respectful parenting

- My child is able to make good decisions.
- I believe that in order for children to respect their parents, parents have to respect their children.
- I believe that both parents and children have rights.
- It's OK for both parents and children to make mistakes.

Self-Calming Thoughts

Self-calming thoughts help us to cool down when we're angry at our kids, or at others. They help us to be more respectful in how we communicate.

Write these examples on the board and then ask the class for more.

- I can be calm and talk quietly.
- He's only three; it's normal for 3-year-old kids to be selfish.
- She's tired and hungry right now.
- He has a right to his own feelings.
- I don't need to deal with this now, I can talk about it after we've all had some rest.
- She isn't bothering me deliberately, she just really wants my attention.
- It's normal for teenagers to forget things.

Note: When we have these thoughts, they **do not** mean that we ignore the rules we have set for our children, or give in to them. Self-calming thoughts help us to feel less angry at our children and allow us to handle the situation in a more positive way.

Time-Out for Parents

It is very difficult to be respectful with our kids when we are extremely angry, frustrated, overwhelmed, or irritated. Time-Out for yourself is a tool you can use to calm down and communicate respectfully with your kids.

Refer to page 8-10 in the student workbook and go over the following:

Red Flags

Your body, feelings and thoughts give you some warning that you are getting upset. To stay respectful toward your kids, and make good decisions, it helps to pay attention to your warning signs, and then take a Time Out. A Time Out is a short break taken from a difficult or dangerous situation. Time-Out gives you some time to think through the situation. Everybody has their own set of red flags, but most people experience at least some of those listed below.

Negative thoughts: Examples: "She's doing this deliberately. She's not going to get away with this. She's a spoiled brat. I'm not going to take this."

Difficult Feelings: Feeling overwhelmed, powerless, frustrated, anxious, hurt, angry, outraged, destructive.

Body cues: Tight muscles in neck, back or jaw, "nervous" stomach, feeling hot, shaking, feeling short of breath, frowning, narrowing eyes. When you recognize any of the red flags listed above, it's time to take a Time-Out. If you are using any of the behaviors listed below, you are already being abusive. Once you start with these things, it's **essential** to take a Time-Out.

Abusive actions: Pacing, pointing your finger in someone's face, shouting, name calling, putting the child down, using sarcasm, threatening, getting in their face.

Tell class: In the homework for this session, you'll find a place to list your Red Flags. You can do it now as we discuss it in class, or do it for homework later.

Time-Out

Refer to page 8-11 in student workbook and discuss the following: Time Out is a simple technique for getting out of a situation that might otherwise result in abuse. It should be used anytime you are not calm enough to talk respectfully to the other person. If you use it regularly, it will prevent you from being abusive.

To use a Time Out, you need to be **aware** of yourself and be **willing** to walk away in the middle of a conflict.

The first step is for you to understand what a Time-Out is, and what it isn't.

Time-Out Is:

- The first step towards working out any problem with your children, your partner, or other people
- A way to develop safety and trust
- A chance for you to get away from a difficult situation so you can think it through, and so that you can better solve the problem when you come back
- A short break that you decide you need to take. This is a Time-Out for you; it is not a discipline technique to use with your child.

Time Out Is Not:

- A way to punish your child.
- A time to walk out angrily saying blaming things, like: "I'm leaving", "I can't take it" or anything that makes the child feel bad.
- Abandoning/isolating your child

Time Out will be used differently for different ages. If there is not another adult available for supervision, young children need to be in a safe area, watching hearing distance and only left for 3-5 minutes. If your child is safe and involved in an activity you can take longer. You can separate from older children for longer periods depending upon their age, personality, and ability to be alone.

Using Time-Out

Refer to page 8-12 in the workbook and discuss the following: Time-Out is a simple tool, and if you use it right, it works. Here's how to do it:

1. Pay attention to the situation. As soon as you feel upset, you need to take the Time-Out.
2. Tell your child that you're taking a Time-Out. Tell them that you need a couple of minutes for yourself, and let them know exactly where you'll be. (Example: I need a Time-Out. I'll be in the kitchen for a few minutes.)
3. Ask yourself, "What am I really upset about? What would be the best way to handle it with my child?"
4. Think positive thoughts to remind yourself that you are the one who controls your thoughts, feelings, and actions. (Example: "Sometimes two-year-olds have tantrums. I need to calm down and handle this situation.")

5. Decide how much time you need to cool down. You may need as little as five minutes for your minor irritations and frustrations, or as much as an hour when you feel very upset. Make sure your child feels safe and is safe being in a room alone.
6. Return to the situation when you feel calm and safe.

After a Time-Out

Refer to page 8-13 in workbook and discuss the following: Before you come back into the situation, decide what you're going to do. Here are some choices:

1. **Let it go:** While you are cooling down, you may realize that you can drop whatever you were frustrated, irritated or upset about. Maybe you misunderstood the situation, and now that you are calm, you see things more clearly and you realize that you are no longer irritated or frustrated. Then you can let it go.
2. **Put it on hold:** You may recognize that the issue is important for you and your child to discuss, but you can decide to do this at a later time. Taking some time to think about an issue can help you to see it more clearly. Putting it on hold also gives you more time to be calm so you can communicate to your child in a way that is respectful.
3. **Discuss it:** When you are feeling calm you may decide you are ready to talk about the situation with your child. You must be ready to listen to the other person, and to communicate respectfully. Remember, you can always take another time-out.

Adapted from Dr. Anne Ganley - Seattle V.A.

Using the Time-Out/Cool Down Log

Refer class to page 8-14 and 8-15 in the workbook and discuss the following: The Time-Out Log is a way for you to record how you are using Time-Out, what you are doing to cool down, and what decisions you make after you cool down.

1. **Description of situation:** Write down two or three sentences or phrases about how you became upset.
2. **Negative thoughts:** What thoughts were you having that caused you to feel upset?
3. **Upset level:** From 1-10, what was your Upset Level? An upset level of 1 might be how you feel in slow-moving traffic. An upset level of 7 or above might be how you feel when your child ignores a request you made or says something disrespectful to you.
4. **Difficult feelings:** What were the difficult feelings you were having, for example, irritated, frustrated, threatened, disrespected or scared.
5. **Left at what point:** What was going on when you left? What were your cues that you needed to leave the situation?

6. **Minutes for cool down:** How long did you take?
7. **Place:** Where did you go to cool down?
8. **Self-calming actions:** What did you do to cool down?
9. **Self-calming thoughts:** What self-calming thoughts did you use to replace the negative thoughts?
10. **Your decision after the cool-down:** Did you let it go, put it on hold, or talk with your child about it?

Ask class to complete the Time-Out/Cool Down Log for homework.

Homework

Refer class to page 8-16 in student workbook and ask them to complete for homework.

Identify Your Red Flags

List the red flags that come up when you get very upset. Remember, the focus of this is you and your behaviors (not your partner, children, boss, or neighbor, etc.) Look this list over at least once a week. When you see these red flags come up, it's time to take a Time Out.

Negative thoughts: _____

Difficult feelings: _____

Body cues: _____

Session 9: Conflict Prevention

Objectives

1. To teach parents new techniques for handling children's anger
2. To help them to communicate in ways that prevent conflict

Lesson Plan

- Homework review
- Responding to our kids when they're angry
- Preventing conflict
- Communication that leads to cooperation

- Practice giving information and describing a solution

Homework Review:

Review the Time-Out/Cool-Down Log. Ask for 2 or 3 examples only.

Responding to Our Kids When They Are Angry

Note: Don't use this with your partner! Use it with your child.

Have class turn to page 9-2 in the student workbook and go over the following

Try taking these steps when your kids are angry:

1. Get control of your own emotions.
2. Acknowledge the child's feeling.
3. Let her know that it's not OK to be disrespectful to other people.
4. Teach your child how to talk respectfully when she's angry (being able to do this yourself is an important first step).
5. If she continues to act disrespectfully, separate from your child (one of you has to leave the area).

Tell class: We are going to discuss several techniques for dealing with our children's anger. Choose the technique that works best for you and your children. Be aware of your child's needs. For example, if your child is terrified of being alone, then separation is not the best technique. If your child is only three years old, then don't leave her alone for more than a few minutes.

Any time you aren't able to help your child stop acting disrespectfully by talking to her, use one of these techniques:

Separation If the conflict is between you and your child, send him to another room, or go to another room yourself. At this time, you should stop all interaction with your child until he calms down. Let him know that you can't be with him when he is being disrespectful, and that you are going to another room. If the conflict is between your child and another child, then the children need to separate. The child who is acting disrespectfully needs to understand that the separation is a consequence of his behavior. When using separation, it is important for the parent to be calm and respectful to the child, and to speak simply and clearly, without criticizing or blaming the child. For example, "When you are hitting and yelling at me, I can't be with you. I'm going to go in the other room until I hear that you are calm."

Diversion Diversion is another technique that works well with young children. Try diverting the child's attention away from the source of her anger giving her something else to focus on. For example, suppose that your child is angry because her brother got to go to the park and she didn't.

After you acknowledge her feeling, you could say, "Let's go for a walk," or "Let's bake some cookies," or "Let's paint a picture." Sometimes this works well to help your child calm down.

Tell class: Let's look at a situation, and see how we can respond to our kids respectfully when they are angry.

Read this example to the class:

Alma has two daughters, Lisa, who is five, and Paige, who is seven. Lisa took Paige's new box of crayons without asking. She used them all, and broke several of them. Paige opens the box of crayons, sees that they are used and broken and starts screaming, slapping her sister, and grabbing her hair. Lisa starts screaming. Alma goes over to the girls to separate them, and Paige starts screaming, "She ruined my crayons! I hate her!" Alma tries to calm her down. Both of Alma's daughters are upset. She needs to acknowledge both their feelings, and set limits with both of them. Because Paige is hitting, Alma needs to talk to her first.

Here is an example of how she could approach her daughters respectfully.

Refer class to page 9-3 in the student workbook as you explain:

Talking to Paige:

- **Acknowledge Paige's feeling:** "I know you're really angry at Lisa for messing up your crayons."
- **Let her know it's not OK to be disrespectful to other people:** "It's not OK to hit her."
- **Teach your child how to talk respectfully when she's angry:** "You can tell Lisa, 'I'm really mad that you wrecked my crayons.'"

Talking to Lisa:

- **Acknowledge Lisa's feeling:** "It hurts when someone hits you."
- **Let her know it's not OK to be disrespectful to other people:** "You need to ask Paige's permission before you use her crayons."
- **Teach your child how to talk respectfully when she's angry:** "You can tell Paige, 'I don't like it when you hit me.'"

Sometimes, this approach works. Other times, children continue to act in a way that is disrespectful. To continue with our example, after Alma talks to both of them, Lisa kicks Paige in the ankle. Paige shoves her. Both are calling each other names.

- **If your kids continue to act disrespectfully, separate them.**

Alma could again acknowledge their feelings: "I can see that you two are still angry with each other. You are hurting each other and you need to be separate until you calm down. Paige, you need to go in the kitchen and Lisa, you need to go in the living room. When you can be respectful with each other you can be together again."

Tell class: Let's look at some situations when your kids were angry and see how you could use respectful skills for helping them to calm down. Ask for three or four examples and discuss, following the guidelines in "Responding to Our Kids When They Are Angry."

Preventing Conflict

Have class turn to page 9-5 in student workbook. Tell class: We're going to talk about ways to prevent conflict with our kids. We'll start with an example of how conflict escalates between parents and kids. As I read this story, pay attention to what's happening between the mother and her son.

Trina just got home from work and is starting to get dinner ready. Her 6-year-old son, Jerome, wipes his feet outside the front door, but they are still covered in mud when he comes in. He walks into the living room, leaving muddy footprints all over the beige carpet. Trina is very upset. She recently cleaned the carpet. Trina says, "Jerome! You got the carpet all muddy again. Look at the mess you made. How many times have I told you to wipe your feet before you come in. You NEVER listen to me!" Jerome says, "Mom, I DID wipe my feet." Trina says, "Get outside and wipe your feet right now!" He says, "NO! I wiped them." She says, "You did not. Just look at the mess you made. Now get out there." He says, "I told you, I already did it." He starts walking away towards his room. Trina says, "You wipe those feet right now, or I'm going to give you a spanking you won't forget." Jerome goes outside rubs one foot over the doormat, and kicks the door. Trina grabs Jerome, pulls him inside and yells, "You're not going to get away with this!" She spanks him and puts him in his room. She says, "Now don't come out until I say you can." She closes his door. Jerome is kicking things, screaming loudly, and throwing his toys around the room. Trina quickly goes to clean the carpet before her husband comes home. She knows he will be upset if Jerome is still screaming when he gets home.

Before you begin the discussion, tell the class to turn to page 9-6 in their workbooks, "Communication that Leads to Conflict." Help the class to identify the negative ways Trina interacted with Jerome, including accusing, blaming, commanding, threatening and hitting. Ask class:

- How did this situation escalate into such a big fight?
- How did Jerome feel after Trina accused him of not wiping his feet?
- How did he act?
- How did Trina feel?

- How did she act?

Tell class: The way we talk to our kids can make a big difference in how they hear us and how they react to what we say. Lots of times when we have conflict with our kids, we are just focusing on how *they* are talking and acting, and neglecting to look at our own behavior. Our kids may be acting "bad" in response to us. We get frustrated when they don't listen, and we blame them for being disobedient, bad, or uncooperative. As parents, we can help our children to be more cooperative by looking at how we talk when we have a conflict with them. We often tell our kids to do or not do things in ways that make them feel defensive or attacked. They react angrily, or ignore us, and then we respond angrily.

To prevent conflict with our kids, there are two things we can do:

1. Take responsibility for how we talk and act when we're upset with our kids.
2. Help our kids to take responsibility for their behavior.

When children make mistakes and we immediately criticize and blame them, we take away the chance for them to feel responsible for the problem, and to think of ways they can solve it. Like adults, when children feel attacked or blamed, they get mad, and lose sight of the problem. They feel victimized, and not responsible for their actions.

For example, think of how we feel as adults when someone in a position of authority criticizes us unfairly: You have fallen behind in a project at work. You know you could have finished it, but you've been putting it off. You usually meet all your deadlines. You feel bad about this project, and you have made plans to stay late for the next couple of days to catch up. Your boss calls you into her office and says, "You're not doing your job. Do I have to look over your shoulder every minute of the day? If you don't finish this project in the next two days, I'm putting you on probation here. I can't have my employees acting so irresponsible."

Ask class:

- Do you still feel badly about being behind?
- Do you still feel like staying late to catch up?
- What would you feel like saying to your boss?
- What would happen if you said what you wanted to say?
- How could your boss have approached you more respectfully?

Tell class: In many situations, kids have the same kinds of feelings as adults. Again, if we want to prevent conflict with our kids, we need to think about how we talk to them, and help them to find ways to feel responsible for solving problems.

Communication that Leads to Cooperation

Tell class: When we don't take responsibility for how we talk to our kids, we tend to do a lot of blaming, criticizing, threatening, and commanding. We're going to look at ways we can communicate with our children so that they cooperate with us, and take an active role in solving problems.

When we have a problem situation with our kids, and we just give them information about the problem in a respectful and non-blaming way, they will often figure out how to solve the problem, and do it themselves.

Let's look at what could happen when Jerome comes into the house with muddy shoes, and Trina communicates with him respectfully.

Refer the class to page 9-7 of student workbook, "Communication that Leads to Cooperation." Go through the example as described on the following page.

Ask class:

- What prevented this situation from escalating?
- What did Trina do to guide Jerome to solve the problem himself?
- How was this situation different from the earlier example?

Steps for Parents

In order to get cooperation from our kids, we need to be ready to:

Write steps on board.

1. Describe the specific problem
2. Think of a practical solution that the child is capable of acting on.
3. Be willing to let the child solve the problem.

If you are too angry or frustrated with your child, you won't be able to go through this process. So before you try to do this, review the anger management skills for adults.

Let's go back to the situation of a child coming in the house with mud on his shoes. In order to get him to take care of the problem, we have to ask ourselves:

Write on board:

- **What is the specific problem that needs to be solved?** It is NOT that he is disobedient, sloppy, lazy or doesn't listen. It is that his shoes are muddy and he is getting mud on the carpet.

- **What is a possible solution?** He can wipe his shoes off more thoroughly. He can take his shoes off and clean them later. He can help clean the mud off the carpet.

Refer to page 9-8 of student workbook and go over the following: Communication that Leads to Cooperation

Give information Describe the problem specifically. (Example: Your muddy shoes are getting the carpet dirty.)

DO:

- Be clear.
- State the facts of the problem.
- Use as few words as possible.
- Speak in a calm voice.

DON'T:

- Blame.
- Judge.
- Criticize.
- Ask questions.
- Say anything about the child's personality.
- Talk about the past.
- Lecture.
- Command or threaten.
- Label your child as "bad," "disobedient," "lazy," etc.
- Use negative language like "You can't."
- Describe the problem clearly and confidently so your child knows what to do with the information. They can feel your confidence, and will act on it.

Refer to page 9-9 of student workbook and go over the following:

Group Exercise

Let's look at some examples of how to invite cooperation from our children.

1. Your son leaves his coat on the floor
 - Negative/critical response: "Why can't you ever pick up after yourself?"
 - Giving information: "I see your coat on the floor."
 - If the child doesn't respond, describing a solution: "Your coat needs to go on the hook in the closet."
2. Your daughter is throwing her ball in the house.
 - Negative/critical response: "I've told you a million times not to throw the ball in the house. What's your problem?"
 - Giving information: "Throwing the ball in the house might break something."
 - Describing a solution: "You can roll the ball on the floor, or throw it outside."

The following exercise could take place in small groups, or you can conduct a large group discussion. Tell class:

Now we're going to practice ways of giving information and describing a solution.

Have class turn to page 9-10 & 9-11 of student workbook.

Practice Giving Information and Describing a Solution

Below are descriptions of five different situations. For each situation, decide first what the problem is. Then fill in the information you would give, and the solution you would describe to your child.

1. Your six-year old interrupts you while you are on the phone.
 - What is the problem? (You can't concentrate on the conversation)
 - What information can you give your child: (I can't talk on the phone when you're talking to me.)
 - If your child doesn't respond, what is a solution? (I need you to go play for five minutes while I finish talking on the phone.)
2. Your nine-year-old left homework papers all over the kitchen table.
 - What is the problem?
 - What information can you give?

- If your child doesn't respond, what is a solution?
3. Your 12-year-old left his bike in the middle of the driveway.
 - What is the problem?
 - What information can you give?
 - If your child doesn't respond, what is a solution?
 4. Your 4-year-old has ketchup all over her fingers and is walking towards the living room.
 - What is the problem?
 - What information can you give?
 - If your child doesn't respond, what is a solution?
 5. Your 14-year-old has been on the phone for two hours and you need to make a call.
 - What is the problem?
 - What information can you give?
 - If your child doesn't respond, what is a solution?

If your child isn't used to you communicating this way, she might not respond at first, but continue trying. If your child doesn't respond, you may need to use other problem-solving techniques.

Homework

Refer to page 9-12 of student workbook.

Practice giving information.

- What was the problem?
- How did you give information?
- What was the solution you described?
- How did your child respond?

Session 10: Setting Limits Respectfully

Objective:

- To give parents skills in using consequences and problem-solving and to set limits with children in a respectful way

Lesson Plan:

- Homework review
- Introduction to limit-setting
- Logical consequences
- Practice using consequences
- Problem-solving
- Putting it all together

Homework Review

Introduction to Limit-Setting

Tell class: In this section we will be learning respectful limit-setting skills with children. These can be very effective once we have a good relationship with our children. Sometimes developing a good relationship takes a lot of work.

If you use these skills respectfully with your child, and your child does not respond, you may need to work more on the relationship.

This could include: showing understanding to your child, listening, spending time together doing things he or she likes to do, encouragement, and support.

As we discussed earlier, domestic violence has a big impact on kids. Sometimes it takes some counseling to build healthy relationships with our kids.

Logical Consequences

Refer to page 10-2 of student workbook and discuss the following: Logical consequences teach a child that there are many generally-accepted social rules that they will probably be expected to follow. When the child breaks such a rule, a specific consequence follows. That consequence should:

- Be directly related to the problem that the behavior has caused
- Involve the child in solving the problem.

For example, if a child spills his milk, the consequence is that he needs to help clean it up. Logical consequences are respectful forms of limit-setting. They help children learn:

- That their own behavior is their own responsibility,
- About making their own decisions about what to do
- About the consequences of their behavior, allowing them to make decisions based on the knowledge of these consequences, rather than fear of punishment

As children grow up, they are better able to make good choices when they understand consequences. Children who are forced to comply out of fear may be more likely to break the law when they are teens and adults because they have learned that the only reason to follow rules is that they will be punished if they don't. Their thinking is, "I can break the rules as long as I don't get caught."

Tell class: Teaching logical consequences is *especially* important to children who have witnessed domestic violence. Because men who batter often teach their children that they must obey or they will get yelled at, threatened or hit, these children get a very strong message that other people are responsible for their actions. When you first start using logical consequences, your kids may at first have difficulty understanding them. Be patient! *You are teaching them lessons that can help them throughout their lives.*

Have the class turn to page 10-3 of their workbooks and read over the following:

How Logical Consequences Differ from Punishment

Logical consequences are different from punishment in several ways.

- *Punishment uses the parent's power over the child. Logical consequences teach children the effect of their behavior on others, and let them take responsibility for changing their behavior.*
 - *Punishment:* "You turn that music down, or I'll take your stereo away."
 - *Logical consequence:* "I know you are enjoying your music, but it's so loud, it's really bothering me and the neighbors. So you can either turn it down, or turn it off and do something else."
- *Punishment is often arbitrary, and rarely related to the situation:*
 - *Punishment:* "If you two don't stop fighting, you won't get any ice cream after dinner."
 - *Logical consequences:* "You two can play together without fighting, or separate and play in different rooms. You decide."
- *Punishment is personal and critical of the child. Logical consequences are not personal, they are not judgmental, and do not imply that the child is a bad person.*
 - *Punishment:* "Stop that whining! You're acting like a baby."

- *Logical consequences:* "I can't answer you when you talk that way because I don't understand you. When you talk in a normal voice I will be able to answer you."
- *Punishment often threatens the child with disrespect or loss of love. Logical consequences are said clearly and calmly, with good will.*
 - *Punishment:* "You're not going with me to the store because you were so bad today. I'm not taking a spoiled brat with me."
 - *Logical consequences:* "You can come with me to the store if you stay with me and help me shop. Otherwise, you can stay at home with Aunt Dee. You decide."
- *Punishment demands that the child obey. Logical consequences permit the child to make a choice.*
 - *Punishment:* "You be quiet or you'll spend the rest of the night in your room."
 - *Logical consequence:* "You can settle down and eat your dinner, or you can leave the table until you're ready to join us." (This will also have a natural consequence of hunger for the child if she decides to leave the table).
- *Punishment is imposed by the parent. Logical consequences allow the child to be involved in problem-solving and in deciding on consequences.*
 - *Punishment:* "You dented the car? You're not going to drive it again. And you're grounded for two months."
 - *Logical Consequence:* "You need to work out a plan with me for helping to get that dent fixed. Think about it, and let me know your ideas."

Adapted from STEP Systematic Training for Effective Parenting, Don Dinkmeyer & Gary McKay.

Have class turn to page 10-5 of student workbook and read the following:

How to Be Sure You Are Using Consequences, NOT Punishment

- **Communicate calmly and directly.** Take a Time-Out if you need to so that you can be sure to speak calmly. A loud voice, warnings, threats, blaming, or a hostile attitude will turn a consequence into punishment.
- **Encourage the child to make responsible decisions.** The purpose of consequences is to help the child to learn, not to force her to submit to you.
- **Be both firm and kind when communicating consequences.** Firmness means establishing a consequence and staying with it. Kindness means talking to your children respectfully and calmly without putting them down.

- **Give information and describe a solution.** The skills we learned in Session 9 can be the first steps of communicating consequences.

Practice Using Logical Consequences

Read the following to the class and ask them to think of consequences. Use the answers in parentheses if the class is unable to come up with a good answer. Tell class: The following are some situations that happen with kids. Let's think of some logical consequences. Then state how you could say them to your children.

1. Your three-year old child draws all over the wall with crayons. What would you say? (Example: "It's not OK to draw on the wall. Let's get a rag and wash it.")
2. Your four- and five-year-old keep fighting over a toy after you have tried to get them to share it. (Example: "You can share the toy, or we will need to put it away. You can decide.")
3. Your eight-year-old is yelling at you and calling you names. (Example: "You can talk respectfully to me, or I'll leave the room and we can talk when you're calm.")
4. Your 11-year-old throws a ball through the kitchen window, breaking it. (Example: You need to help me clean up the glass. Then we should work on a plan for you to help pay for a new window.)
5. Your seven-year-old hits his four-year-old brother. (Example: "You need to separate from your brother, and then we need to talk about how you can use words instead of hitting.")

Discuss briefly the following: When your children are used to punishment they may not respond or will escalate their behavior with this new method of discipline. Be patient and continue using it. If you can stay calm and be consistent in following through with the consequence, over time you will find that this method is more effective and that you have a more positive relationship with your children.

Problem-Solving

Refer class to page 10-7 of student workbook. Tell class: Problem-solving with your child is a way to deal with a recurring problem situation you and your child are having. Problem-solving with children helps them in a number of ways because they learn:

- The process of how to solve problems with another person
- How to negotiate with another person
- That their opinions and feelings are important
- That they can think of ideas to solve problems
- That they can take responsibility for finding solutions and following through with them

When children help to figure out a solution to a problem, they are much more likely to want to cooperate because they helped create the solution. They have a sense of pride and accomplishment when they are able to think of solutions and then act on them.

Problem-solving works best with school-aged children and teens, but even a pre-schooler can be involved with problem-solving if you keep it simple and short.

The process of problem-solving is a skill your kids will benefit from throughout their lives. The more you do it, the easier it will become.

Some important tips:

1. Don't try to problem-solve when you or your child is still angry or upset.
2. If you or your child becomes upset or angry during problem-solving, take a time out and try it again when everyone is calm.
3. Listen to each other without interrupting.
4. In a family where there is domestic violence, problem solving between the children and both parents together is not likely to succeed and may not be safe. When one person has used violence, the other person may not have an equal voice in the problem-solving process. Each parent should problem-solve individually with the child.

Ask class to turn to page 10-8 of the student workbook and read over "Problem Solving with your Child, Ten Steps."

Problem Solving with your Child: Ten Steps

First, plan a meeting with your child to problem solve a conflict. Make it a time that is quiet, without interruptions and when you are both calm. Do not do it in the middle of the conflict.

Table 3. Ten Steps

Steps	Example
<p>Step 1: Describe the problem Use "I" messages telling your feelings and needs. Don't accuse, blame, or criticize. Stick to the situation and how it affects you. Be specific</p>	<p>Parent: <i>"I feel frustrated in the morning when it's time to go and shoes aren't on and backpacks aren't ready by 8:30. We need to be able to leave by 8:30 or we're late for school and work. I feel pressured."</i></p>
<p>Step 2: Ask child for his/her feelings or thoughts about it.</p>	<p>Parent: <i>"Can you tell me how it is for you?"</i></p>
<p>Step 3: Listen Listen quietly without interrupting, asking questions, commenting, or advising. Keep it to "Oh, mmm, I see."</p>	<p>Child: <i>"I hate it when you rush me. And I don't like it when you turn off the TV during my favorite show. We always have to leave just before it's over and I miss the end."</i></p>
<p>Step 4: Reflect back what you hear from your child Summarize his/her feelings, wishes, wants etc. without advising, criticizing, or judging.</p>	<p>Parent: <i>"You really like that show."</i> Child: <i>"Yeah, Shining Time Station is my favorite."</i> Parent: <i>"You feel frustrated when you have to miss the end of it."</i> Child: <i>"Yeah, I never get to see the end."</i></p>
<p>Step 5: Summarize the problem including both people's needs/wishes Again, avoid judging, criticizing, blaming.</p>	<p>Parent: <i>"It sounds like the problem is that you would like to be able to watch all of your favorite show, which ends at 8:30, and I need us to be ready to go out the door by 8:30."</i> When we show respect for a child's feelings and wishes, they feel more willing to cooperate.</p>
<p>Step 6: Invite your child to problem-solve</p>	<p>Parent: <i>"Let's see if we can think of any ideas for how to work this out. Let's just brainstorm ideas and I'll write them down."</i></p>
<p>Step 7: Write down all ideas on paper Don't discount any or make comments at this time.</p>	<p>Child: <i>"You could drive J. to daycare after I go to school so we could leave a little later."</i> Parent: <i>"Okay, I'll write that down. We could videotape your show and you could watch it after school."</i> Child: <i>"I could get all ready with shoes on and backpack by the door before the show starts. Then I can be ready to go right out the door when the show ends."</i></p>
<p>Step 8: Read each idea and take turns commenting on them.</p>	<p>Parent: <i>"I can't take J. to daycare last because then I'll be late for work. And that's not okay."</i> Child: <i>"I don't want to videotape it. I want to watch it in the morning."</i> Parent: <i>"I like your idea of being ready before the show."</i> Child: <i>"Okay."</i></p>

Steps	Example
Step 9: Make a plan together for how the solution will work. Include details and what each person needs to do.	Parent: <i>"Let's talk about how that would work. What do you need to do to be ready before the show?"</i>
Step 10: Write the Plan on paper and put it on a wall or someplace visible each day.	Child makes a "morning map" with all of the things he/she needs to do each morning before TV goes on.

If the "Plan" starts to fail, meet again to problem-solve. You may want to include consequences for not following through on your part of the plan. Example: no TV until completely ready for school.

Go over problem-solving steps with the class. Break into groups of 2 or 3 and ask parents to think of a problem situation they have with one of their kids. Have each small group pick one problem to role-play the problem-solving steps. One person plays parent and one plays child. If there is a third person, that person is the observer. Bring the class together and share how it went. Ask:

- Was it comfortable?
- What was difficult about it?
- Did it seem realistic?
- Do you think it would work with your children? Why? Why not?

Explain to class: Sometimes problem-solving works and sometimes it really doesn't. If it doesn't, you can try again later with another situation.

Homework: Practice problem-solving with one of your children this week.

Session 11: Understanding Children's Development

Objectives:

To help parents: 1. Understand children's development 2. Have age-appropriate expectations for their children 3. Apply parenting skills that fit their children's developmental level

Lesson Plan:

- Homework review
- How children develop their sense of self
- Helping children develop self-esteem and self-competence

- Developmental norms and expectations

Homework Review: *Ask for two or three volunteers to share their homework on problem-solving.*

How Children Develop Their Sense of Self

Tell class: Psychologists, sociologists and others who study human behavior have proposed many different theories of how children develop their sense of self. All parents know about child development from raising kids; however, often we are too busy just getting through our lives to take the time to think about it.

As we try to help our children recover from the effects of domestic violence, it's important to think about how kids develop their idea of who they are.

Ask class: What are some of the factors that influence a child's sense of who he or she is?

Have class turn to page 11-2 in their workbooks.

Generate a list on the board, including:

- Heredity: What they inherit from their family
- Environment: What they experience, what they learn, how people treat them

We can't control what our children inherit from us, but we can control some of the things they experience. Most people who study child development agree that children develop their sense of themselves from:

- What they see and hear from the important people around them
- What they learn from their parents, families, teachers, friends and community
- What they learn from other sources, including TV, movies, advertising, etc.

Tell class: I am going to talk very briefly about what some researchers who have studied child development have found:

Secure Attachment Relationships

A child's early relationship with his parents (attachment) establishes his ability to form relationships with other people throughout his life, including friends, family members, spouses, and his own children.

A child's relationship with her parents begins at birth. This needs to happen for practical reasons. An infant needs to engage their parent for their own survival, for their protection, and their ability to explore their environment.

A child who has a secure, reliable relationship with her parent is comfortable in exploring her environment, and responding flexibly to changes in the environment. This child can be relatively easily comforted by her parent.

"Secure" attachment develops from

- Trust
- Consistency in responding to the child
- Encouragement
- Nurturing
- Activities that your child can enjoy and succeed at
- Opportunity to have a relationship with the same adult(s)

Ask class: What are some ways we can help our children to develop trust?

Have class turn to page 11-3 in the student workbook and fill in the list as you discuss it.

Examples:

- Provide a predictable, safe environment
- Be consistent
- Respond to the child's signals of need; for example, determine what they need when they cry or fuss, and respond by feeding them, changing them or comforting them
- Develop regular routines that the child can participate in
- Encourage them
- Give children freedom to explore
- Nurture them
- Show affection by hugging, cuddling
- Show your child positive attention, by talking, playing, exploring with them
- Comfort your child when he or she is fussy
- Provide activities that your child can enjoy and succeed at

Learning from Important Role Models As most parents probably notice, children imitate the behaviors of their parents, and of other people who are important to them. Children are more likely to imitate the behaviors of people they view as like them. For example, boys are more likely to imitate their fathers, and girls are more likely to imitate their mothers.

Children learn the behaviors they observe, and are more likely to imitate these behaviors when they are rewarded for it. Imitation starts at an early age. Researchers (and parents) found that children can imitate behaviors beginning at age 12 to 21 days (for example, sticking out their tongues). Infants can imitate adults sounds by 12 weeks old. What behaviors do we want our children to learn and imitate?

Ask class to turn to page 11-4 in workbook.

Examples:

- Skills for self-sufficiency
- Constructive, nonviolent problem-solving
- A healthy way of living
- The ability to make sound decisions
- The ability to tell others what they need in a respectful way
- The ability to respect other peoples' needs

Ask class: How can we teach our children these behaviors?

- Model positive behavior for them
- Let them spend time with others who can model these behaviors

What behaviors do we NOT want our children to learn and imitate?

- Violence towards others
- Other criminal behavior
- Self-destructive behavior, such as alcoholism, drug abuse
- Disrespect for other people
- Disrespect for themselves

Developing Self-Esteem/Self-Competence

Self-esteem is our sense of self-worth. It is our perception of how capable and valuable we are. Children who feel that they are able to have some control over their feelings and experiences tend to develop more self-esteem than children who feel that their whole lives are controlled by factors outside of themselves.

The way that parents teach and instruct their children is closely related to how children develop their sense of control of their lives. A child develops the sense that she can control her feelings and experiences when she is able to make decisions and solve problems for herself with support from her parents.

A child develops the sense that his feelings and experiences are controlled by factors outside of himself when his parents do not allow him to solve problems for himself.

Ask class to turn to page 11-5 in workbook.

Ask class: Where do we get our sense of self-esteem?

Examples:

- Our parents
- Family members
- Friends
- Teachers
- Performance in school
- Spouses
- Coworkers
- Performance at work
- Neighbors, etc.

Ask class: How does violence in a family affect the self-esteem of family members?

- Of the person who is violent?
- Of the person who is battered?
- Of the children?

Ask class: What are some ways that we can help our kids develop self-esteem?

Examples:

- Encourage them
- Set up activities for them where they can feel successful
- Give them opportunities to solve problems independently
- Show affection to them
- Listen to them

Self-competence is a product of how we make judgments about our own abilities. It affects how we think, how we perform a task, what we choose to do, and how successful we will be at a particular task.

Children develop a strong sense of self-competence when

- They are able to experience repeated success at tasks.
- They get approval from other people who are important to them
- They are able to watch other people perform tasks successfully.
- They are encouraged to perform tasks independently.

Children develop a poor sense of self-competence when

- They don't get encouragement or praise for mastering tasks
- They lack positive role models
- They don't have the opportunity to master tasks (e.g. the parent takes over the task from the child instead of letting the child work it through)

Children internalize the way their parents and teachers talk to them and make those messages part of the way they talk to themselves. For example, a boy is trying to put together a puzzle and his father says, "That's it! Keep going. That puzzle is pretty hard, but I know you can do it." If his father encourages him to work through difficult tasks on a regular basis, that boy may learn to talk himself through difficult tasks in the same way.

A girl is trying to braid her own hair and her mother says, "I've shown you a hundred times. You just can't do things right. Get out of the way, let me do it!" If her mother interrupts her efforts with a put-down, and takes over the task, that girl may talk to herself the same way, and become easily discouraged when performing a difficult task. Let's look at some ways that we can help our children develop self-esteem.

Refer class to page 11-7 in workbook: "Ways to Help Children Develop Self-Esteem."

Ways to Help Children Develop Self-Esteem

1. **Encourage your children:** Notice your children's positive qualities and let them know that you appreciate these.
2. **Set clear limits:** Set limits that are reasonable and appropriate to your children's ages, to help them feel valued and secure.
3. **Listen carefully:** Pay attention to what your children say, and let them know you hear what they are saying.
4. **Be affectionate:** Hug, kiss, pat, and smile at your children. Tell them you care for them.
5. **Allow them to solve problems:** Encourage your children to solve problems and make some decisions for themselves.
6. **Communicate respectfully:** Share your feelings, expectations and needs with your children in a way that is respectful.
7. **Promote independence:** Allow your children to play independently in a safe environment.
8. **Spend time with your kids:** Reading together, talking and listening, or playing together helps children feel cared for.
9. **Arrange for new activities in which your child can succeed:** Set up new activities for your children that they enjoy, like playing sports on a team, taking music lessons, etc., so that your children learn new skills and gain confidence in themselves.
10. **Be a positive, non-violent role model for your children:** Maintaining safe, reliable interaction with your children and their other parent can help them develop self-esteem.
11. **Let your children know they are capable:** Allow your children to have responsibilities and let them know you have confidence in them.
12. **Let your children know they are worthy of love just for who they are, not related to their behavior:** Tell them you like them, enjoy them, appreciate them, etc., without relating it to their behavior.

Tell class that we will be talking more about ways to encourage our children next week.

Developmental Norms and Expectations for Kids

As we learn and apply respectful parenting skills, it helps to understand developmental norms for kids. Developmental norms are standards that are regarded as typical for a particular age group. Researchers have observed that children develop in a very clear and predictable pattern. We can think of this pattern in terms of physical, social/emotional, and thinking ability.

While every child develops a little differently, there are some general guidelines for what we can expect our kids to be able to do at different ages. If these are already familiar to you, start thinking about how your child's developmental level will determine which parenting skills will work best.

Sometimes we expect our kids to do something, like sit still for three hours, or take care of a little brother or sister, or remember to do their chores, and our kids just can't do it. Then we may get frustrated and punish them. But a normal two-year-old is incapable of sitting still for three hours. A five-year-old can't take care of her baby brother. And an eight-year-old may have trouble remembering to do chores if we don't remind him. If we understand that children don't have the **capacity** to do certain things, it helps us to be more respectful parents.

There is a great deal of information available about child development, and we are just going to review a little bit of it. If you are interested in learning more, your instructor can suggest some books to read.

Understanding what is "normal" for children of different ages is very important in terms of deciding what kind of parenting skills to apply. Sometimes our children "misbehave" simply because they aren't developmentally ready to do what we expect them to do. Other times, they misbehave because they aren't paying attention to us, or they are distracted or upset, or they want to get our attention, etc.

When our children don't do what we ask them or expect them to do, it is helpful to ask ourselves, "Is a child of this age ready/able to do the task I'm asking my child to do?"

Tell class: When children experience any kind of major stress, anxiety or trauma, they often regress; that is, they begin to act much younger than they are. For example, a six-year-old who is normally very good at expressing himself may suddenly have a tantrum and start screaming "NO" like a two-year-old when he is very distressed.

For children who have witnessed domestic violence, regression is very common. Keep this in mind when you are trying to understand why your child is not acting the way you expect him to act.

Now, let's look at some problem behaviors that many parents encounter with their kids.

To instructor: Have class turn to page 11-8 in student workbook. Go over the examples listed below. Then ask the class for a couple of examples. The purpose of this exercise is to help parents develop age-appropriate expectations for their children.

Table 4. Child Behaviors

Child's Age	Behavior	Child's Ability	Solution
2 years	Spilling milk while drinking it	Limited physical coordination and awareness	Serve milk in a cup with a cover
5 years	Begins to clean room and doesn't finish	Limited ability to stay on task without adult supervision	(1) Simplify chore to a few tasks, or (2) stay in room and to guide child
14 years	Coming home later than agreed on	Priority is to spend time with friends, develop independence	Talk with child to clarify rules and problem-solve together

When to get counseling for your child

In Session 2 we discussed the effects of domestic violence on children. If you notice any of these reactions over a long period of time, or if they are extreme, it may be necessary to seek counseling.

Behaviors that indicate counseling:

- Withdraws
- Bullies, threatens or intimidates others
- Initiates physical fights
- Has used a weapon
- Has been physically cruel to people
- Has been physically cruel to animals
- Has stolen while confronting a victim
- Has forced someone into sexual activity
- Has set fires
- Has deliberately destroyed others' property
- Has broken into someone else's house
- Has run away from home at least twice
- Intentionally hurts her/himself

- Has frequent nightmares for prolonged period
- Shows sudden change in behavior/personality
- Changes eating/sleeping patterns
- Shows lack of interest in friends/school/etc.
- Grades change at school

Homework: Have class continue the exercise on page 11-8 of the student workbook at home, adding situations with their own children.

Session 12: Strengthening Relationships With Our Children

Objectives:

1. To help parents support their children's sense of competence and self-worth through encouragement
2. To help parents strengthen their relationships with their children
3. To summarize and review class materials

Lesson Plan:

- Homework review
- Ways to encourage our children
- Building a positive relationship with our children
- Summary
- Plan for the future

Homework Review Review situations where parents describe problem behaviors in the context of age-appropriate expectations.

Ways to Encourage Our Children

Tell Class: Last week we talked about ways to help our children develop self-esteem and to strengthen their feelings of competence and self-worth. Encouragement was one of the ways we discussed to help children develop self-esteem.

Today, we are going to talk in more detail about ways to encourage our kids. Many of you are probably already doing this, but it's nice for kids to be encouraged in many different ways. Let's start by talking about what encouragement is.

Write on board: Encouragement: Recognizing our children's positive behavior and special qualities, and letting them know we appreciate these.

There are two kinds of encouragement:

- Encouragement for behavior
- Encouragement of the person.

Encouragement for behavior

Here are some ways to encourage your child's behavior. You can do one or several of these at a time.

- **Notice your child's effort** Talk about your child's effort, the time she spent, the energy she put into doing something, or her ability to stay focused on the activity. For example, "You played quietly with your Legos for quite a while!" or "It looks like you put a lot of effort into organizing your toys!" When you are encouraging behavior, you are not judging whether your child built a stable structure with his Legos, or organized her toys in a way that looks good to you. You are simply encouraging your child's effort.
- **Describe what you see without making a judgment** Avoid words like "Good, the best, excellent." Describe what you see: "I see that you made your bed!" or "I see that you're sharing with your brother."
- **Help your children to recognize and express their own feelings of accomplishment.** When you think your child really feels pleased or proud of an activity, you can acknowledge that feeling. For example, "You must feel great about getting on the swim team!" or "I bet you're really proud of that report card!" This helps children to feel good about themselves, and make positive evaluations of their achievements. Don't assume that your child will always feel proud of the same things you're proud of.
- **Talk about the specific behavior you are encouraging in your child.** Avoid global expressions like, "You were so good in the store." Instead say, "I really like the way you walked next to me in the store, and helped me pick out groceries." or rather than saying, "You were nice to your brother today," be specific: "You shared your Playdough with your brother. I think he really liked that."
- **Recognize your child's efforts and improvements in behavior.** Examples: "You tried hard on that math problem before you asked for my help." or "I notice you tried to pick up all the clothes from under your bed this time."

- **Separate the children's worth from their work.** Example: Your five-year-old picks up all her toys. Instead of saying "You're such a good girl," talk about the specific behavior: "You picked up all your toys!"
- **Avoid comparing one child to another.**
- **Offer encouragement with honest feelings. Don't say it if you don't mean it.**

Encouragement of the Person

This kind of encouragement is given spontaneously. It is not based on whether our children are behaving well, or doing what we want. It is just pure appreciation for who they are. We should try to do this at least one time every day.

Ask class: What are examples of encouraging or appreciating your children for who they are rather than what they do?

Examples:

- I like you.
- You're fun to be with.
- I'd like to spend some time with you.
- I enjoy being with you.
- I missed you today.
- It's good to see you.
- I like your smile.

You can also express appreciation for your children non-verbally by hugging them, smiling at them, touching them gently, and holding hands with them.

Ask class: What gets in the way of encouraging our children?

Some examples:

- Expecting too much from them
- Promoting competition between siblings
- Focusing on their failures rather than their successes
- Feeling tired, stressed-out

- Worrying about our own and our children's safety

Building a Positive Relationship with Our Children

Tell Class: In our busy lives it is hard to find time to do special things with our kids. We often get caught up in just taking care of their needs and focusing on problem behaviors, and don't find time to really appreciate them as people.

Relationship building means spending time with your child when there is no "need" to. This time is for enjoying each other's company. Some parents find that their child's problem behaviors decrease when they spend more "fun" time with the child. A lot of children misbehave simply because they want positive attention from their parents, and they want to know that they are important.

Here are some suggestions for relationship building:

- Schedule one-on-one time, or "special time", alone with each of your children. This is a time for you and the child to do something you enjoy together, without the other parent, or brothers or sisters, or any other family members. It may be just talking, or playing together, or going for a walk, etc.
- Special time should not be used for a reward, or withdrawn to discipline the child. If your child acts out during your special time together, you can use the separation technique discussed earlier, for example, "I can't be with you when you're yelling. We'll have our time together later."
- Arrange special time even if you have visitation with your child and only see him once or twice a week. Put some time aside from your normal activities together, and really talk to and listen to your child.
- Be consistent and follow through with special time. Children really look forward to it, and will be disappointed if you cancel.

Summary

We have talked about lots of different things during this class. Before we finish, we hope that each participant will be able to identify a few things he or she can take with them, and use with their children.

Ask class to turn to page 12-6 in their workbook.

To start our review, let's look at the emotional needs of children who have experienced DV. Not every child will have all of these needs. So as we go through, think about each of your children, and which of these needs you think applies to them. Then we'll make a plan for addressing their needs.

Go over the list of emotional needs of children who have DV in their families, and ask class to think of ways they can help their children with these needs. Write ideas on board, including the examples provided. Have participants write ideas in their workbooks that are appropriate for their children.

Emotional Needs of Children Who Have DV in Their Families

1. Dealing with fear Feeling fear of those they love, in their home, where they should feel most safe

Child needs to:

- Be able to talk to someone they trust about their feelings
- Learn ways to keep themselves safe and to know they have a plan for what to do when there is violence
- Have a feeling of control in the situation ("I will go over to my neighbors when it happens")

Plan:

- To talk to my child about the violence
- To listen to her feelings
- To let her know that it's OK to talk about the violence, and to ask questions
- To develop a safety plan with her or to work on being nonviolent

2. Dealing with anger Feeling angry at the abusive person, or at the survivor for not leaving the situation

Child needs to:

- Know that it is normal and okay to feel angry about this
- Be able to talk about the feelings with someone they trust
- Express their anger in non-destructive ways

Plan:

- To acknowledge my child's anger and her right to feel angry
- To use my parenting skills to teach her to express anger by talking about it, not by hitting, kicking, yelling, etc.

- To model appropriate expression of anger by using respectful communication, and by avoiding any kind of violent, threatening, or abusive behavior

3. Dealing with mixture of anger and love Feeling torn between feelings of anger and love toward the abusive person. Feeling guilty for both feelings

Child needs to:

- Learn that it's okay to feel both anger and love toward someone
- Know it is okay to love their parent even when they hate the behavior they see
- Know they are not bad if they love the abusive parent

Plan:

- To help your child understand that is normal to have both positive and negative feelings for someone they love

4. Confusion about being able to love both parents Feeling they need to choose one parent over the other, or the need to take sides. Thinking, "If I love Mom, I can't love Dad" and vice versa.

Child needs to:

- To know that it is okay to love both parents at the same time

Plan:

- To accept that your child loves the other parent, even if you no longer do
- To let your child know that it's OK with you that he loves his other parent
- To support your child when he interacts with his other parent, so that he doesn't feel caught in the middle
- To encourage your child to talk freely about his feelings for and activities with the other parent, if he wants to

5. Dealing with loss Loss of a healthy, safe family; loss of one parent if they leave, or the constant threat of this; loss of comfort in the home

Child needs to:

- Talk about feelings with someone they trust
- Develop a support system of extended family or friends outside the home

Plan:

- To help your child to identify another person; for example, a grandparent, aunt or uncle, teacher, counselor, etc., who they can talk to about their feelings
- To encourage/arrange for your child spend time with supportive family members and friends
- To speak honestly and thoughtfully about changes in your life that might effect them (i.e. moves, separation, etc.)

6. Feelings of Guilt and Responsibility Fears of having caused the violence, or not stopping it in some way. Feeling that they have to prevent the violence, take care of Mom, and take care of the family.

Child needs to:

- Understand that the violence is not their fault, and that it is an adult problem for the adults to work out.

Plan:

- To talk honestly to your child about the violence, and to reassure her that she is not to blame
- To make sure she doesn't take responsibility for housework, chores, child care, etc., that are her parents' responsibility
- To take whatever steps possible to ensure that violence does not take place again

7. Feeling life is unpredictable and never knowing when a crisis will erupt Feeling vulnerable on a daily basis, with no power or control about what will happen.

Child needs to:

- Find areas in their lives where they can have control and make plans and decisions
- Create a safety plan with someone they trust
- Create some structure and stability wherever possible (creating daily routines that provide a sense of control)

Plan:

- To help your child plan a predictable daily routine to help him have a sense of control
- To maintain some consistency in his meals, bed-time, clothing, or a favorite toy, even when you are in transition
- Whenever possible, to let them know when there is a change in plan, and the reason for that change

- To encourage your child to make his own decisions whenever it's appropriate, and to give him positive feedback for decision-making

Helping Kids Who Witness DV: Review

1. How do you think your kids have been affected by domestic violence?
2. What are some ways you are helping or will help them to recover from these effects?
3. What are some of your strengths as a parent?
4. What are some ways you can build on these strengths (for example: get counseling, find ways to speak respectfully about your child's other parent, work on relationship-building with my child, etc.)
5. List one problem behavior for each of your children. Next to it, list one parenting skill you can use to deal with that behavior.

Behavior Skill

6. What are the three most helpful things you learned in this class?