

BOUNCING BACK

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This booklet was printed with funds from the City of Port Phillip and written by Shannon Richardson, Team Leader of Hanover Welfare Services Homeless Children's Specialist Support Service. The tips and tools provided are based on the knowledge and experience of Hanover and its work with children who experience family violence.

The Homeless Children's Specialist Support Service is a program funded under the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness.



## WHAT IS THIS BOOKLET ABOUT?

'BOUNCING BACK' IS A RESOURCE TO HELP YOU AS A PARENT BOOST YOUR CHILD'S ABILITY TO BOUNCE BACK FROM LIFE'S CHALLENGES AND THRIVE. CHILDREN WHO ARE THRIVING HAVE A STRONG SENSE OF SELF, FEEL VALUED AND LOVED AND HAVE STRATEGIES TO DEAL WITH DIFFICULT LIFE CIRCUMSTANCES.

This booklet is filled with:

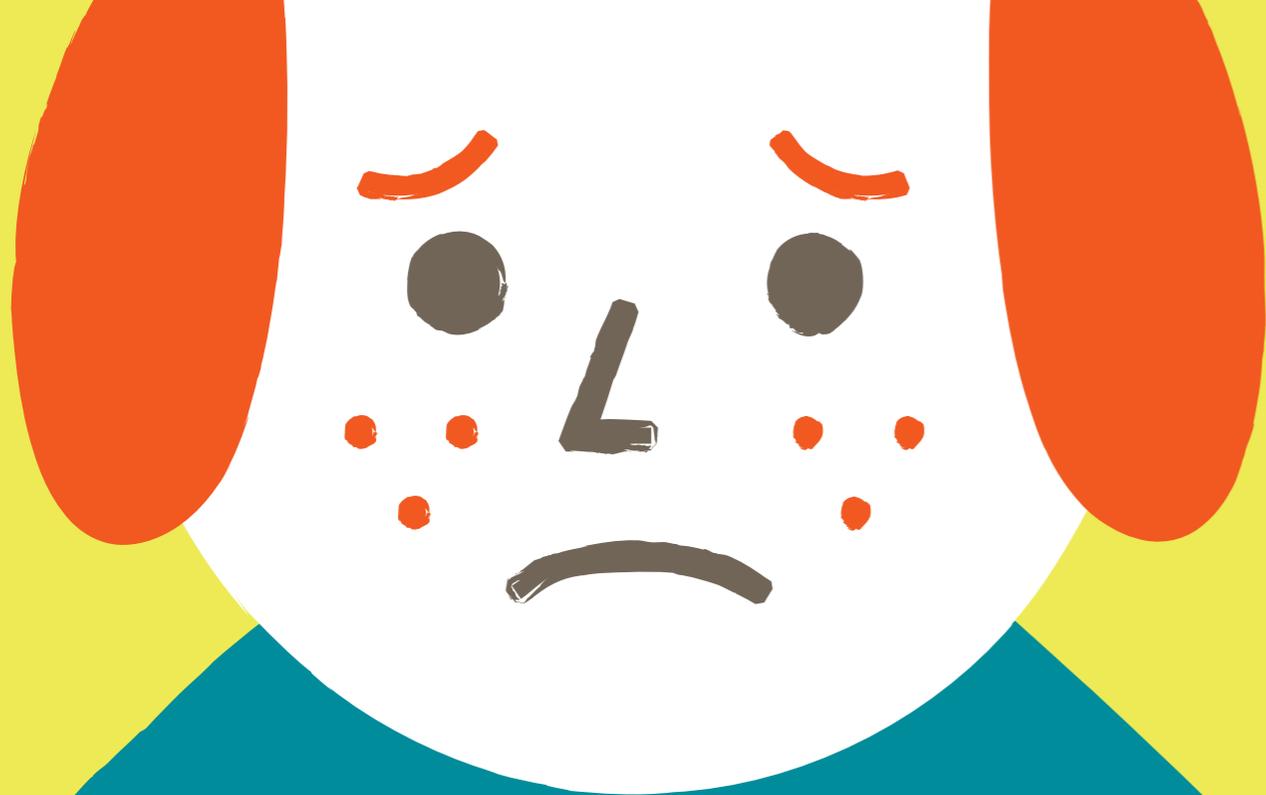
- Tips to help you pick up signs that your child may need your help
- Helpful parenting tips and strategies to improve your relationship with your child
- Fun games and activities for you to play with your child (see pages 7–12)
- Tips and information about self care
- Support services you can access (see page 21)

This booklet is designed for parents and children who have experienced family violence. It provides practical tools which you can use to help your child recover from the effects of family violence. The information is appropriate for primary school age children.

While we refer to 'parents' in this booklet, it will help anyone who cares for children – such as grandparents, relatives, foster parents, other adults and communities.

The information may also be useful for professionals who work with children and their families who have experienced or witnessed family violence such as teachers, community workers, community nurses and GPs.



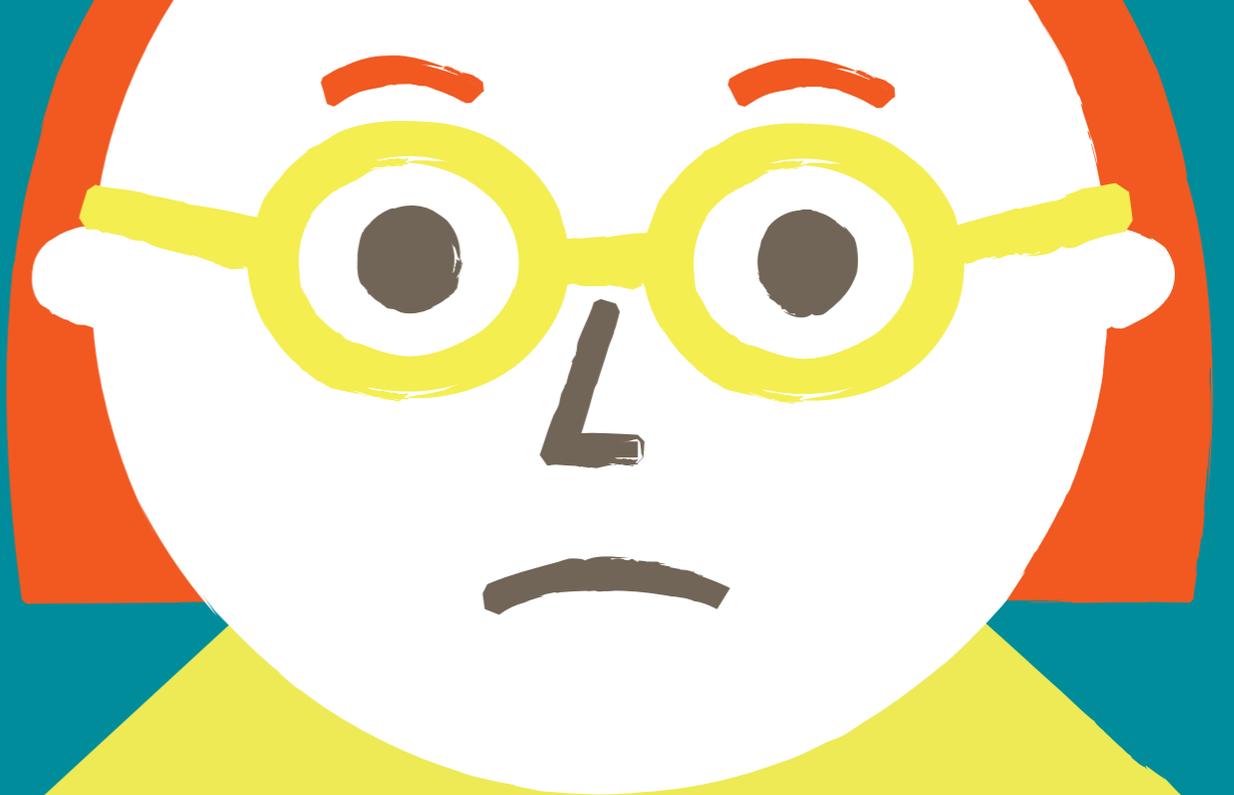


## WHAT IMPACT DOES FAMILY VIOLENCE HAVE ON CHILDREN?

Violent sights, sounds and experiences can take many forms and will shape how your child sees the world and develops socially and emotionally. Little eyes and ears don't miss much and will soak up everything that is around them. Children exposed to violence can feel strong emotions such as fear, confusion, guilt, anger, frustration and worry. Physical symptoms from stress such as tummy aches, head aches and bed wetting may also be present. It is crucial that children are supported during this time to help them recover and minimize the chances of long term emotional and behavioural problems.

It is essential to know that although a child who lives with violence is forever changed, they are not forever damaged. Things will get better, this is just the first step.

THERE IS A LOT PARENTS CAN DO TO HELP CHILDREN BOUNCE BACK, THRIVE AND LEAD HEALTHY LIVES.



## SOME SIGNS A CHILD AFFECTED BY FAMILY VIOLENCE MAY NEED SUPPORT

### The child may:

- have stopped being able to do previously learnt skills like tying their own shoelaces or dressing themselves
- have delayed speech – using baby talk and being clingy
- be withdrawn or aggressive (hurting self, others or you)
- have become argumentative, challenging authority; or is very cooperative and overly eager to please
- be falling behind at school and finding it hard to concentrate
- be having nightmares and wetting the bed
- have taken responsibility for the violence, saying "it's my fault"
- be constantly worrying about possible danger to and safety of loved ones
- be playing or drawing about a violent or distressing event

CHILDREN WHO EXPERIENCE VIOLENCE CAN BE FRUSTRATED OR FEARFUL AND MAY SHOW SIGNS OF **REGRESSION**. THIS MEANS THEY MAY SHOW BEHAVIOUR THAT THEY HAVE ALREADY GROWN OUT OF, SUCH AS WANTING A BOTTLE, BED WETTING, HAVING TEMPER TANTRUMS, WHINING, AGGRESSION, THUMB SUCKING AND BABY TALK. IT IS IMPORTANT TO BE ABLE TO RESPOND TO YOUR CHILD WHEN YOU SEE THESE CHANGES.

### THINGS PARENTS CAN DO TO HELP A CHILD AFFECTED BY FAMILY VIOLENCE:

#### LOVE

Take time to show your child extra love and attention and make sure that the child knows just how important they are. Do not get angry about the regression or shame or embarrass your child into acting their age – this will only add stress and can cause the child to regress even further or remain in the stage longer. Play down the regressive behaviours and focus on the positive.

#### REWARD

Celebrate small successes with rewards like trips to the park and recognise achievements such as good behaviour.

#### GIVE POSITIVE FEEDBACK

Say nice things about your child's behaviour and focus on what they do well.

#### ROUTINE

Encourage healthy habits by keeping regular times for bed, meals, naps and play. This will help create security for your child.

#### REDUCE TV TIME

Violent TV programs and video games may scare children or encourage aggression. Instead, find fun things to do that build your relationship.

#### LISTEN

Show that you understand that things are hard, scary or frustrating for them.

### SPEAK POSITIVELY

There are ways that you can talk with your child and help your child feel important and confident. There are times when every parent must and should say no, but there are many times when you can say something in a positive way instead of a negative way.

### ROLE MODEL

Children do as you do. You can role model respect and self respect, politeness, honesty, good choices, compassion, healthy expression of emotions, or any behaviour or attitude you want to see in them.

### SHOW EMPATHY

Empathy means seeing things from other people's point of view, understanding and sharing the feelings of others. This doesn't mean you have to agree with your child. It just means that you are letting them know you understand how they feel. When children feel understood, it's easier for them to try to understand others. Empathy is the foundation for developing caring relationships.

### COMFORT

During or after a violent experience, your child will be feeling a huge mix of emotions. If they are hurt, frightened, sad or angry, being comforted helps them know they're not alone with their big feelings. They will also learn healthy ways to comfort themselves and others as they get older.

Ways to comfort your child:

- Hugs and kisses
- Tell them you love them often
- Put them to bed each night with a story
- Sing songs with your child
- Take them outside to play
- Encourage your child to take three deep breaths when they are upset (you too!)
- Get them to cuddle a favourite toy when upset

### INSTEAD OF THIS

### TRY THIS

"DON'T HIT THE DOG"

"WHY DON'T YOU PAT THE DOG NICELY"

"THAT'S NOT THE WAY TO DO THAT"

"LET'S FIGURE OUT A BETTER WAY TO DO THAT"

"PUT YOUR SHOES ON NOW"

"LET'S SEE HOW FAST YOU CAN PUT YOUR SHOES ON"

"GO TO BED"

"TIME FOR BED AND REST SO YOU'LL FEEL GOOD WHEN YOU WAKE UP"

**PLAY WITH YOUR CHILDREN.** ONE OF THE MOST HELPFUL THINGS TO DO IS JUST STOP, SIT, LISTEN AND PLAY. IT'S A GREAT WAY FOR YOU TO CONNECT, GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER BETTER AND HAVE FUN. AS SIMPLE AS IT SOUNDS, SOMETIMES ONE OF THE MOST DIFFICULT THINGS FOR PARENTS TO DO IS TO STOP AND REALLY RELAX IN THE MOMENT WITH THEIR CHILD. PRACTICE THIS. YOU WILL BE AMAZED AT THE RESULTS.

### FOLLOW THEIR LEAD

Be patient, follow your child's lead and talk to them about what they are doing. Allow them to try different things and to make mistakes.

There are a lot of different things you can do to support your child to feel safe and recover from their experience of family violence. Remember you don't have to spend lots of money on equipment and toys to play with your child. Here are some easy, inexpensive play ideas you can incorporate into everyday life.



### SIMPLE TOYS & PUPPETS

Let your child lead this play. For example a child who's worried about going to a new school may deal with the anxiety by setting up a classroom for the puppets or dolls to practice meeting new friends and teachers.



### MESSY PLAY

Messy play stimulates the senses! Encourage your child to have fun with sand or mud.



### READING

Reading to, and with, your child is a great way to connect.



### ART

Paint and draw with your child. Ask your child to paint their family members and all the things they love about them.



### OUTDOOR PLAY

Head to the park and run, tumble or throw a ball. There's nothing like kicking a ball hard to help release tension.



### MUSIC

Dance with your child or create music with odds and ends from around the house!

# GAMES & ACTIVITIES

6 PAGES OF FUN!

## FAMILY AWARDS NIGHT

**Materials:** Paper and pen to create awards.

**Outcome:** Building confidence and self esteem in children and encouraging positive behaviour.

This activity will help you as a parent to reinforce positive behaviour through praise, by recognising children for their good work.. Everybody likes to be noticed for the good things they do. If parents can learn to reinforce these deeds, children will find more opportunities to be positive.

After dinner, announce to the children that it is Family Awards Night. Each child is awarded a certificate for their good deeds of the past week. See illustration below for ideas!

Children may also pitch in and find appropriate awards for their parents. Be creative with what the awards are given for. Ask the child what it felt like to do something nice for someone else and create family discussion around their good deeds.



**BROTHER/SISTER SUPPORT AWARD**  
For giving a needed hug or helping with homework

**ELBOW GREASE AWARD**  
For helping clean the house or tidy your room

**PATIENCE AWARD**  
For playing with your younger sibling nicely

**SAFETY AWARD**  
For helping a younger child cross the street

**FITNESS AWARD**  
For turning off the TV and playing outside

**GENEROSITY AWARD**  
For saving for a siblings birthday present

**SELF-STARTER AWARD**  
For getting up on your own for school

## OUR WORLD ACTIVITY

**Materials:** Large piece of paper, pens/textas/decorating supplies.

**Outcome:** Helps with developing family rules, communication and creativity.

Talk with your children about the world we live in. Encourage them to think about what it would be like if we did not have rules. Talk about the benefits of going to school, traffic laws, laws about littering, stealing, destroying property; and others. Discuss how rules are established in families too, to help them function smoothly.

Imagine and discuss what life might be like if there were no rules about bed time, no chores and no respecting or caring for each other. Talk about how the family would be disorganized and that family members may not feel happy.

As a family create your own 'world map' on a big piece of paper. Explain to your children that this is your family's 'world'. Come up with family rules that you all agree on and write/draw these rules onto your map. Hang it up for all to see. Be as creative as you can!



OUR  
FAMILY'S  
WORLD

## COOKING TOGETHER

Cooking with your children is a great way to spend quality time together and can be a valuable learning experience too. Older kids can practice their reading by calling out the instructions; and their maths by measuring and counting the ingredients. Younger kids will enjoy pouring, squishing, rolling and stirring.

To ensure the experience is fun and stress-free:

- Prepare some of the ingredients in advance to help the process run smoothly.
- Choose simple, uncomplicated recipes such as no-bake slices or balls (see recipe right).
- Supervise your child and use the experience to discuss safety and hygiene; such as not touching the stove or knives, and washing their hands.
- Allow for mess and try to be patient if things don't go perfectly. Have fun! If there are spills or mistakes, offer guidance and let your child try again. Kids will eventually master the skills and will feel very proud when they do so.
- Praise your child for their efforts and help.

## EASY COCONUT BALLS RECIPE

This is an easy, delicious recipe with lots of healthy ingredients. The balls can be frozen for up to 3 months and are great for playlunch!

### Ingredients:

10 plain biscuits (eg. Marie or Milk Arrowroot)  
15 dried apricots  
½ cup sultanas  
¼ cup chia seeds (available from supermarkets)  
395g can sweetened condensed milk  
1½ cups desiccated coconut, plus extra for rolling

### Method:

**Adult task:** Finely chop dried apricots.

**Kid tasks:** Place biscuits in a strong plastic bag and either squish them with your hands or use a rolling pin, until crushed.

Place chopped dried apricots and crushed biscuits into a large bowl. Add all other ingredients and mix well. With wet hands, roll the mixture into small balls and coat with the extra coconut. Refrigerate for 2 hours before serving. Makes 30.



## BACK TO BACK ACTIVITY

**Materials:** Paper and pens or textas.

**Outcome:** Encourages communication and improves listening skills.

Two family members sit back to back; one is the describer, the other the drawer. To start, the describer draws a simple shape or diagram on a piece of paper (eg. a triangle sitting on a circle). Younger members of the family might find it easier to be given a kitchen utensil, such as a spoon, spatula or whisk.

Without revealing what the diagram (or object) is, the describer must describe to the drawer what they have to draw. The drawer then tries to recreate the shapes based on what the describer tells them.

How the final picture ends up will depend entirely upon how well the describer gives instructions, and how the drawer interprets them! There are often hilarious results! Remember to have fun! It's okay to make mistakes.



## CREATE A FUNNY STORY

**Materials:** Creativity and a sense of humour.

**Outcome:** Develops imagination and memory. Begin a short story and let your children finish it. For example: "Once upon a time a monkey ran away from the zoo. He was feeling hungry..."

Allow your children to let their imaginations go wild in adding to the story, each person taking a turn. Have your children try to remember all the different parts of the story by commencing from the very start each time.

This game can be played anywhere – at home, in the car, whilst waiting at the doctor... Encourage your child to start writing their own stories too, this can be very therapeutic and develops language and writing skills.

"ONCE UPON A TIME..."

A MONKEY RAN AWAY FROM THE ZOO...

HE WAS FEELING HUNGRY...

SO HE WENT TO THE SHOP TO BUY...

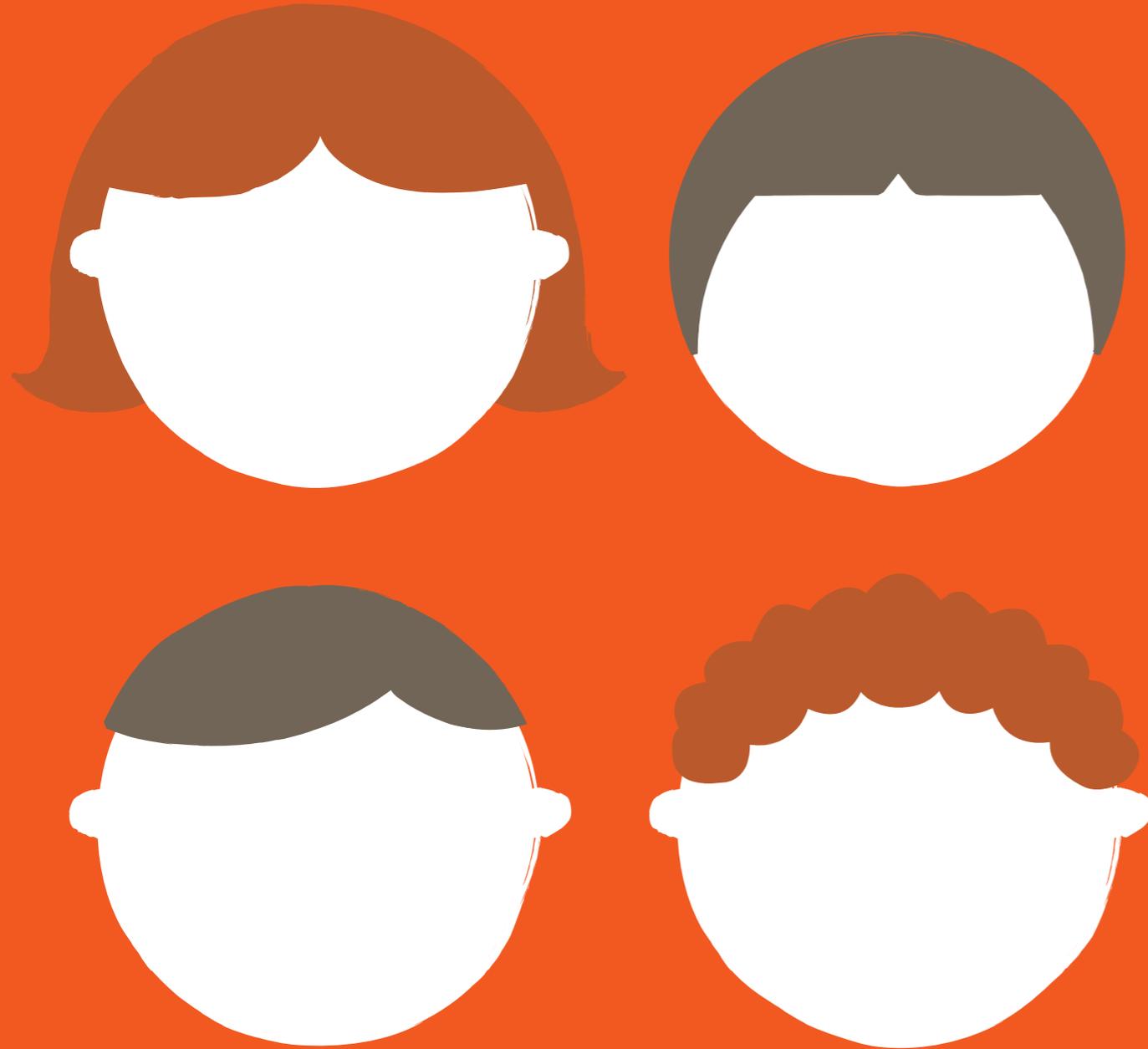
A CHOCOLATE CAKE AND A BANANA...

AND A BRAND NEW PAIR OF SHOES...

AND THEN HE...

WENT TO THE PARK TO SHOW OFF ON THE MONKEY BARS."

# HOW DO YOU FEEL TODAY?



USE PENCILS, CRAYONS OR MARKERS TO DRAW FEELINGS FACES ON THE KIDS!

## EXPRESSING FEELINGS

Help your children identify and express their feelings (happy, sad, mad, scared, etc.). Point out that all feelings are okay and that other people have these feelings too. Help them begin to put words and names to these feelings. You might say: *"Daddy has moved out and you are sad, it's okay to be sad."*

*"I know you are angry at Mummy but it's not okay to hit me. If you are angry we need to talk about it and think of ways to help you manage."*

Talk about your own feelings and how you express them. What do you do when you are angry or frustrated? How do you manage those emotions? Lead by example, and show your child that it is okay to talk about their feelings.

There are some great books out there to help children identify and talk about their feelings. Check out your library, bookshops or ask the school welfare officer for advice and suggestions.



IF AFTER TRYING A NUMBER OF STRATEGIES YOU FEEL THAT YOU AND YOUR CHILD ARE NOT MAKING PROGRESS IT MAY BE TIME TO GET SOME PROFESSIONAL ADVICE AND SUPPORT.

A LIST OF **SUPPORT SERVICES** TO CONTACT IS PROVIDED ON PAGE 21.

## BUILDING STRONG CONNECTIONS WITH SCHOOL

Let your child know that school is important to your family. Talking about school with your child sends the message that you value education and are interested in what's happening for your child at school.

It's very helpful to make the school aware of the violence and how it has affected the children. This allows the school to provide the special support children need at this time. You can speak with the Principle, Assistant Principle or Welfare Officer. This can help children feel school is a safe place for your family.

Talking to school can be difficult but is a really important thing to do. If the school is made aware of things like intervention orders, they can help to keep children safe from the person who is committing the violence.

Schools can be a great source of support for parents during these difficult times also.

Developing a good relationship with the school may include some of the following:

- Talking informally at school drop-off and pick-up times to teachers and other parents
- Going to parent-teacher interviews
- Doing canteen duty
- Helping in the classroom with weekly reading, writing and maths programs
- Going to school concerts and other events
- If your child has had to move schools ask about strategies the school may have for helping new children adjust – a buddy system, for example



AFTER EXPERIENCES OF VIOLENCE YOU MIGHT FIND THAT IT CAN BE DIFFICULT TO BOND, PLAY OR BE POSITIVE WITH YOUR CHILD. IF THIS IS HAPPENING FOR YOU, KNOW THAT IT IS NORMAL AND THAT FAMILY LIFE CAN BE RESTORED. IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOU TRY TO REGAIN A STRONG, SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR CHILD. THIS IS KEY TO A CHILD'S ABILITY TO HEAL AND RECOVER FROM FAMILY VIOLENCE. **TALKING WITH YOUR CHILD** ABOUT THE VIOLENCE IS VERY IMPORTANT.

## HOW TO TALK ABOUT THE VIOLENCE

Speak about the person in a general way – try to avoid name calling. Challenge the behaviour not the person. Instead of 'daddy is a bad man' say 'daddy is behaving in a hurtful way at the moment'. Your child may still love the person who is committing the violence and may be confused by feeling this way. This could be hard for you too! But it will really help your child if they are able to express these feelings. It's a lot scarier for children when no one talks to them about the violence.

## HOW DENIAL AFFECTS CHILDREN

- Child learns that the violence is normal
- Child is afraid to talk about the violence
- Child is confused, doesn't understand
- Blames themselves
- Learns to deny and not to talk about their own feelings
- Learns that it's not okay to ask about the violence or discuss it
- Gives the child unrealistic beliefs about the causes of violence



## WHAT CHILDREN NEED TO HEAR

- The violence is 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
- I will help you to stay 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 (see page 18)
- You are an individual and can choose not to fight or hurt people
- Talking about this might be hard for you. That's normal
- Things will get easier

## BENEFITS OF TALKING TO CHILDREN ABOUT THE VIOLENCE

- Children feel safer, cared for and understood
- Learn that violence isn't their fault
- Learn that violence isn't an okay way to solve problems
- Learn that it's okay to talk about feelings

**LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF.** WHEN YOU EXPERIENCE FAMILY VIOLENCE IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU TEND TO YOUR OWN NEEDS. IF YOU LOOK AFTER YOURSELF YOU ARE IN A BETTER POSITION TO HELP YOUR CHILDREN.

### TAKE TIME OUT JUST FOR YOU

Do something that makes you happy or go outside to an open space where you can walk and get some fresh air. Inhale the air and feel yourself breathing and moving. This may give you some space to think positively about your life and what you want it to look like.

### TEXT/TALK TO SOMEONE

It is important that you have adult conversations with supportive people. Supportive people may be a friend, a family member, a GP or a support worker – it is important to listen and learn from other people whose wisdom and experience you respect. You might begin by sending them a text, phoning them or meeting with them, if you can. Just think that making this one contact will help you feel better.

### RECOGNISE YOUR STRENGTHS

You have to be very strong and resourceful to survive family violence. Your skills and abilities have kept you and your children going and may have already helped you to leave. The ways you have coped and worked to lead a normal life are signs of your many strengths under enormous pressure. You can draw on this strength to create a better life for yourself and your children.

### WRITE DOWN YOUR THOUGHTS

It is helpful to write down your thoughts about the following questions in a diary.

Think of a time when you have been able to keep you and your children safe.

- What did you do to keep safe?
- Who helped you and was supportive?
- What did your children find helpful?

Focus on times when you felt happier and more confident in yourself.

- What was different back then?
- Who was around?
- What were they doing?
- What were you doing?

Create a picture of a more positive future. If you woke up one morning and the violence was gone.

- What would your life look like?
- What is the first thing you would notice that is different?
- What would you be doing that is different?
- What would your children be doing that is different?



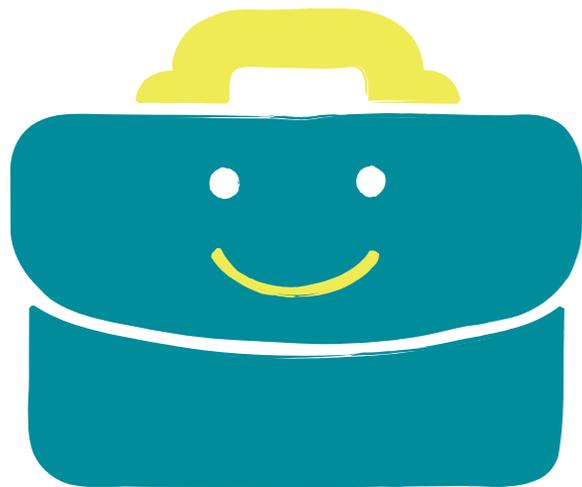
## KEEPING SAFE

**Plan where to go** and who you can call in an emergency. If you and your children have to leave a violent situation very quickly, it is a good idea to have a bag packed with essential items. Such as:

- Money, credit cards, medicare cards, centrelink information
- Passports, birth certificates and copies of Family Violence Orders
- Clothing and medication
- Books and comforting toys for your child
- A spare key to your house and car

**Prepare a Safety Plan** and discuss it with your children (if they are at an appropriate age).

- Help your child choose a room in the house where they feel safest but can escape from if necessary. Tell them to go to this room if there is a fight and not to get involved in the fighting.
- Have a code word to signal they need to go.
- Teach your children how to contact family, friends or neighbours they will be safe with.
- Teach your children how to call 000. Tell them not to hang up as this assists the services to monitor what is happening and to find you.
- Practice what each child should say if they have to report violence eg. *"My address is..... My name is..... and my mum is being hurt."*



## CREATING SAFETY AFTER THE VIOLENCE

IT IS CRUCIAL THAT CHILDREN FEEL SAFE AFTER THEY HAVE EXPERIENCED FAMILY VIOLENCE. CHILDREN, LIKE ADULTS, NEED TO FEEL SECURE IN ORDER TO RECOVER. BE AWARE THAT YOUR CHILD'S SENSE OF SAFETY IS DEPENDENT ON WHETHER YOU ARE SAFE AND FEELING OKAY.

IT'S NATURAL TO BE UPSET AT TIMES AND YOUR CHILDREN MAY SEE YOU CRY - REASSURE THEM IT'S OKAY FOR GROWN-UPS TO CRY, THAT YOU'LL FEEL BETTER SOON AND YOU LOVE THEM VERY MUCH.

## WHY SMACKING IS A BAD IDEA

At times children can be very testing and drive you a little crazy! But smacking doesn't help and can cause serious harm.

Children have the right to feel safe. They deserve the same level of protection as adults. Hitting is very scary for children and may cause them to regress.

- Hitting teaches that violence is the way to get what they want; they may start to hit you.
- Hitting teaches violence and power in a relationship is normal.
- Hitting means children do not learn to manage conflict.
- Hitting does not change behaviour; it makes children frightened of you and they learn to lie about the behaviour.

## HELPING CHILDREN TO BEHAVE WITHOUT SMACKING

Recognise the problem – is your child feeling tired, hungry, cold or worried? Fix the problem and the behaviour may improve.

If your child is 'in a state' there is no point reasoning, or hitting. Give everyone some space and discuss things once everything is a little calmer.

Separate your child from their bad behaviour. They need to know that they are loved no matter what and that your love does not depend on their behaviour. Try saying *'I'll always love you, but we need to talk about your behaviour'*.

Children need attention. Sometimes parents forget to acknowledge children when they behave well but give them a lot of negative attention when they behave badly. This teaches children if they behave badly they will get attention. Catch them doing something good and tell them what you liked about their behaviour. This will encourage good behaviour in the future.

## PREDICTABILITY ENHANCES SAFETY

Predictable people, places and daily nurturing routines help to establish a sense of safety for children.

Star charts are a great way to promote a daily routine. Star charts can also help you to focus on and reward your child's good behaviour. You can download our free star chart at:

<http://www.hanover.org.au/resources-for-professionals>

## MAKE MEMORIES

Talk together about the good and funny times you have had with your child. Make a Memory Book with photos, stories and drawings. Plan future memories with your child – plan to go on a bush walk or a day at the beach. You can create many happy experiences for your child.

## SURROUND CHILDREN WITH POSITIVE ADULTS

To grow and develop, children need to be surrounded by adults who will protect them from harm and promote positive behaviours.

Have conversations about safe people and help children to identify them. Encourage your child to seek help and guidance from these people if they are feeling unsafe.

## SAFETY HAND ACTIVITY

Get your child to trace around their hand on a piece of paper – this will be their 'safety hand'. On each of the traced fingers help your child to write down people or things that help them feel safe. This may be a parent, a teacher, grandparent, friends, pets or their favourite toy.



# SUPPORT & INFORMATION

For urgent help contact:

**POLICE**

☎ 000

For assistance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims and survivors of family violence contact:

**ABORIGINAL FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND LEGAL SERVICE**

☎ 1800 105 303

If you have concerns that your child has been sexually abused contact:

**CASA (CENTRE AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT)**

☎ 1800 806 292

For support for workers and families to help stop family violence contact:

**DVRCV (DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RESOURCE CENTRE VICTORIA)**

☎ (03) 9486 9866

For support and information for migrant and refugee women in their primary language contact:

**INTOUCH MULTICULTURAL CENTRE AGAINST FAMILY VIOLENCE**

☎ 1800 755 988 (Mon-Fri, 9.30am-5.30pm)

For telephone counselling for young people aged between 5 and 25 contact:

**KIDS HELP LINE**

☎ 1800 551 800 (24 hours)

For crisis telephone counselling contact:

**LIFELINE**

☎ 13 11 14 (24 hours)

Parenting can be very stressful, especially when family violence is present. If you need support in any way contact:

**PARENTLINE**

☎ 13 22 89

If your child is hurting themselves in any way contact:

**ROYAL CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL**

☎ 1800 445 511

For support, general information and referrals contact:

**WIRE (WOMEN'S SUPPORT AND REFERRAL)**

☎ 1300 134 130 (Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm)

For support, information and referrals to safe accommodation contact:

**WOMEN'S DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CRISIS SERVICE**

☎ 1800 015 188 (24 hours)

For information, safety planning, legal advice, smart phone apps and links to websites that have information on family violence, visit:

[www.asksomeone.org.au](http://www.asksomeone.org.au)

This booklet can be found in electronic form and printed off at [www.hanover.org.au](http://www.hanover.org.au) or [www.portphillip.vic.gov.au](http://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au)

