

Good Practice Models of Working with Children

Linda L. Baker, Ph.D., C.Psych.

Executive Director

Centre for Children & Families in the Justice System

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Beliefs

- Developmental context
- Relation to experience
- Meaning for child
- Potential impact (+ & -)
- Potential impact (+ & -) if “corrected”

R's intervention:

- Seek to understand from child's perspective
- JOIN – start where child is
- Gradually increase child's capacity and comfort caring about both Mom & Dad
- Supportively reframe, challenge, identify exceptions re: distortions
- START with material outside of family (e.g., animals, stories, peers)
- Move at the Child's PACE
- Be aware of critical background factors and attempt to address (child as part of a family system)

Survival Strategies

- Blocking/disconnecting
- Making it better through fantasy
- Taking charge via care-taking
- Reaching out for help
- Crying out for help
- Re-directing emotions into + outlets
- Trying to predict behaviour of the abuser

Children's Roles

- Inform intervention
- Help explain sibling, mother-child or father-child tension

About Children & Family Roles When Woman Abuse Occurs:

- Imposed or assumed
- More than one
- Strategy for coping
- Life beyond violent context
- Engender + or - emotions

Examples of Assumed or Assigned Roles:

- Caretaker
- Mother's confidant
- Abuser's confidant
- Abuser's instrument
- Perfect child
- Referee
- Scapegoat

Preschoolers

Developmental Features

Potential Impact

learn to express aggression & other emotions

learn unhealthy ways of expressing anger and aggression

Experiences & observations most salient in forming meaning

confused by conflicting messages; may see as mutual fighting

egocentric thinking

may attribute violence to themselves

concrete; outcome more salient than the process

focus on damage

- *How come Daddy doesn't live at home anymore?*
- He (was) trying to take phone out of her (Mom).
- *What happened?*
- He (Daddy) was so mean. He tried to rip the phone out of her (Mom's) ear.
- *How come?*
- She was calling the policeman.
- *Did the policeman come to your house?*
- Yes.
- *How come the policeman came to your house?*
- Don't know. Daddy didn't like (the) policeman.
- *What did the policeman do?*
- *The policeman said, 'Get out (of) her house' in a big voice*
- *He used a big voice?*
- *Daddies and policemen yell.*
- *How come they yell?*
- *They're mad.*

Children Ages Six to Eleven

Developmental Feature

Potential Impact

▶ **emphasis on fairness and intent**

→ **Possibly more susceptible to acquiring rationalizations justifying violence**

▶ **success at school has primary impact on self-concept**

→ **accessibility for learning may be decreased**

Children Ages Six to Eleven *(cont.d)*

Developmental Features

Potential Impact

- increased influence from outside family → Possibly > influenced by messages that confirm attitudes linked with abuse
- increased same sex identification → may learn gender roles associated with woman abuse
- competition assumes new importance → may use hostile aggression to compete

Adolescents

Developmental Features

Potential Impact

▶ **increased autonomy**



negotiation skills may be compromised; autonomy transition may be more difficult

▶ **puberty**



may try to physically intervene; impose will with intimidation or aggression

▶ **increased peer influence & desire for acceptance**



possibly more embarrassed; may try escape or use costly coping

Adolescents *(cont.d)*

Developmental Features

Potential Impact

- ◆ **dating raises issues of sexuality, intimacy, relationship skills**



May have difficulty establishing healthy relationships



- ◆ **increased influence by media**

possibly more influenced by negative media messages re: violent behavior, gender role stereotypes