

# Good Practice Models of Working with Mothers

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# What is a “good practice?”

- An approach that matches the best information we have at this point in time
- sometimes an “ideal” that is difficult to match in the field under current funding arrangements

# Good Practices

- How are these “good practices” selected?
  - literature review: *What About Me!* (2004)
  - program model review
  - attention to rigorous evaluations (i.e., the “best evidence”)
  - focus on program components that match need profile of abused women who are mothers

# Assumptions

- Helping mothers is arguably the best way to help their children
  - our “professional” intervention is usually temporary and episodic. Moms are 24/7.
- Mothers can do a great deal to help children heal from traumatic experiences
- Safety is the priority over other issues

# Assumptions, con't.

- differential responses will be required: there is no “one size fits all” so help women tell us what they want and need
- women and children transitioning away from violence may need extra support
- women can have multiple and often integrated needs (e.g., housing, income support, job skills training, etc.)

# Five Components

- Advocacy
- Healing the bond
- Helping with the concerning behaviour of children
- Understanding how children are affected
- Skills to parent children exposed to violence in the family

# First a caveat

Programs are situated in a broader context.

As a community, don't forget:

- out-reach to under-serviced groups (e.g., newcomers)
- identify and address barriers to accessing services (e.g., language, transportation, child care, stigma)
- talk to each other

# Advocacy

## Assumptions

- women can have multiple and often integrated needs (e.g., for housing, income assistance, referral)
- Women often experience stressors above and beyond the violence/abuse (e.g., poverty)

# Advocacy

Model program:

- Cris Sullivan et al. (Michigan, U.S.A.)
- advocacy for women leaving refuge
- paraprofessionals help women for 6-8 hours per week with moving, setting up household, accessing community resources, emotional support, etc.
- support and mentoring for children

# Advocacy

- some positive evaluation results
- caveat: very intensive involvement may be hard to replicate in the field
- For more information...

Sullivan, C.M. (2000). A Model for Effectively Advocating for Women with Abusive Partners. In J.P. Vincent & E.N. Jouriles (eds.), *Domestic Violence: Guidelines for Research-informed Practice*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, pp. 126-143.

# Healing the bond

## Assumptions

- children's emotions may include anger at a mother, sense of betrayal, fear of abandonment, grief, confusion
- children need to know Mommy loves them, does not blame them for anything that happened, and will keep them safe

# Healing the bond

Model program:

- PARKAS (Parents Accepting Responsibility, Kids Are Safe) from Australia
- focuses on both children and mother
- fathers may be involved after men's treatment
- new manual under development

# Healing the bond

Among the aims are to:

- Provide children a psychologically safe space to begin to acknowledge and process grief, loss and pain
- Create opportunities for children to safely re-connect with a parent around what has often been a shared experience of trauma
- Facilitate a positive shared experience between the child and the parent whilst opening the way for them to communicate about some painful and unresolved issues within their past

# Healing the bond

For more information...

- Wendy Bunston (2001) *PARKAS: Parents Accepting Responsibility Kids Are Safe*. Melbourne, Australia: Royal Children's Hospital Mental Health Service & Djerriwarrh Health Services.
- see the “good practices” data base at the Australian Domestic & Family Violence Clearinghouse

# Help with concerning behaviour

## Assumptions

- mothers often want help with their children's concerning behaviour
- we know a lot about helping children with behavioural “problems” and should access those knowledge bases when treating children exposed to violence who have concerning behaviour “problems”

# Help with concerning behaviour

## Assumptions (con't)

- first step is a thorough assessment of each child's presenting issues
- measure chosen need not be a violence-specific intervention
- helping a mother address a child's concerning behaviour removes a major stressor from a mother's life

# Help with concerning behaviour

## Model Program

- Project SUPPORT (Jourlies et al.), USA
- target audience is children in refuge who meet criteria for “conduct disorder”
- intervention is based on principles of treatment with conduct disordered youth
- some promising evaluation results
- same concept can be applied to other “problems” observed in children

# Help with concerning behaviour

To find more information...

- Ezell, E., R. McDonald & E.N. Jouriles (2000). Helping Children of Battered Women: A Review of Research, Sampling of Programs and Presentation of Project SUPPORT. In J.P. Vincent & E.N. Jouriles (eds.), *Domestic Violence: Guidelines for Research-Informed Practice*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, pp 144-170.

# Understanding how children are affected

## Assumptions

- mothers can help children heal from the effects of violence at home (i.e., not just a job for “professionals”)
- mothers can be supported to see how each of her children has been affected in a unique way

# Understanding how children are affected

- mothers do *not* need to know about poor outcomes of children in research studies
- mothers can help children develop healthier coping
- mothers are highly motivated to help their children and want to know how

# Understanding how children are affected

## Model Program

- Helping Children Thrive (2004)
- not a program per se but a resource to support the work of service providers
- can be integrated into individual or group interventions in a variety of settings
- material chosen to address expressed needs of mothers and needs of children who lived with violence

# Understanding how children are affected

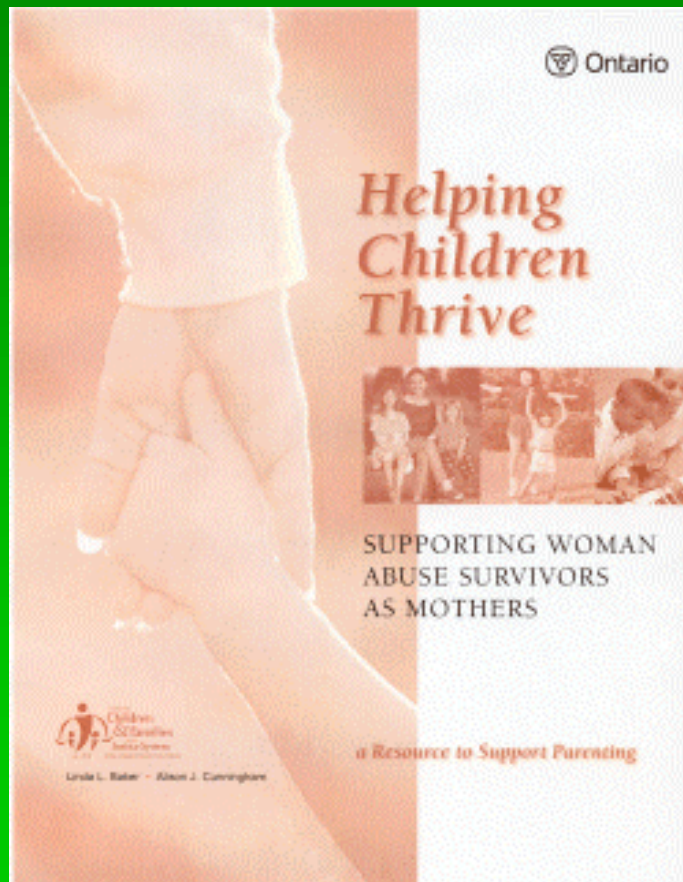
Topics addressed include:

- how an abusive partner can affect you as a mother / how abusive men parent
- how my child copes (then and now)
- how my child may be thinking and feeling about what happened
- normal feelings a mother may have about her children

# Understanding how children are affected

- 10 everyday essentials of parenting for when children have lived with violence
- basics of “good” discipline
- exercises to practise (e.g., clean up your room)
- guidelines for setting family rules that are respectful of everyone

# Understanding how children are affected



Download at no cost from:

- [www.lfcc.on.ca/mothers.html](http://www.lfcc.on.ca/mothers.html)

Also a related pamphlet:

- [www.lfcc.on.ca/HCT\\_pamphlet.html](http://www.lfcc.on.ca/HCT_pamphlet.html)

# Skills as parents

## Assumptions

- feeling competent as a parent is a great (but illusive) feeling
- there are no perfect parents
- many women worry about their kids and all women want to be the best mothers they can be

# Skills as parents

- Many good parenting programs available
- we cannot recommend one over others
- however, it is important to match program material to the needs and learning styles of your “client” population
- material from Helping Children Thrive can augment any parenting program

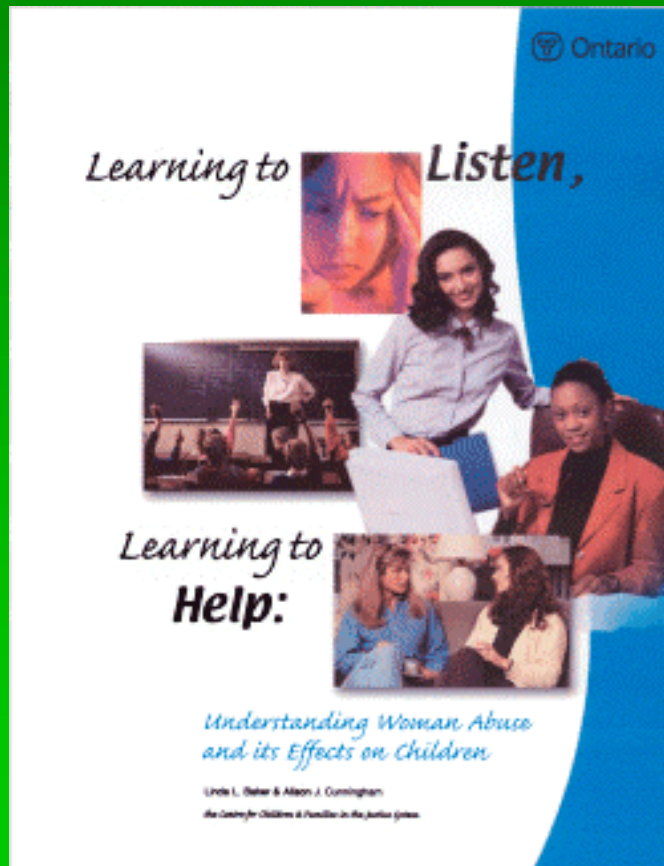
# Soon to be available...

- Michele Paddon (2005). Mothers' Group Concurrent Program Model. London, Ontario: Children's Aid Society of London & Middlesex.
- [mpaddon@caslondon.on.ca](mailto:mpaddon@caslondon.on.ca)
- designed for women whose children are in a "children exposed" group

[www.Ifcc.on.ca](http://www.Ifcc.on.ca)

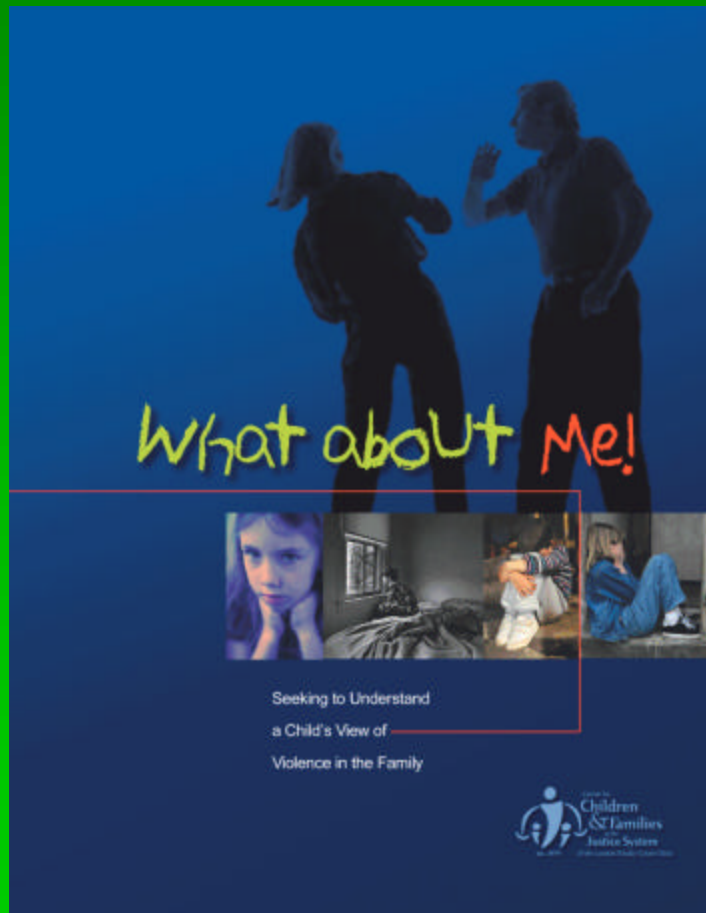
- On our web site, we have many resources available for download at no cost
- Helping Children Thrive (2004)
- Learning to Listen, Learning to Help (2005)
- What About Me! (2004)
- “Packard” handbooks

# Learning to Listen, Learning to Help



- Understanding Woman Abuse and its Effects on Children
- Baker & Cunningham (2005)
- designed for students & volunteers

# What About Me!



- Seeking to Understand the Child's View of Violence in the Family
- Cunningham & Baker (2004)
- extensive literature review
- new framework for assessment & intervention

# Contacting us

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