

# What Are Children Learning from Violent Relationships

Children learn significant messages about behaviour and gender roles from parents who are role models. When exposed to family violence, they may incorporate this behaviour in their relationships and activities as children and later as adults, resulting in an intergenerational pattern of violence.

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## Children may learn inappropriate attitudes and behaviours, such as:

- That one way to cope with stress is through the use of violence.
- That it is possible to love and hurt someone at the same time. It is acceptable for men to abuse women, including husbands to hit wives.
- That violence is an appropriate way of resolving problems. Violence is an effective way to solve problems, win arguments or to accomplish your goals.
- That it is legitimate to use physical force to get what you want.
- That violence can and should be used to make someone behave or do the right thing.
- Men are strong and cruel, women are weak, helpless victims - and such inequality in relationships is normal.
- That it is alright to use violence when other things do not work. There are few, if any, consequences for violent acts.

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## How domestic & family violence affects learning:

Additionally, children may have difficulty concentrating at school, thinking instead about what might be happening at home. This anxiety is a major distraction and impacts on the child's ability to learn. Children may also habitually switch off at school, having learnt to do this to cope with the violence at home.

