

# How Children are Affected by Living with and Witnessing Domestic Violence

## *Emotional Effects*

- Feelings of powerlessness
- Low self-esteem, feelings of worthlessness
- Confusion and insecurity
- Sadness and depression
- Poor definition of self and/or defines self in parenting role (role reversal)
- Ambivalence
- Constant fear
- Self-blame, guilt at escaping punishment and being unable to protect someone they love

## *Behavioral Effects*

- Poor impulse control
- Stress disorders and psychosomatic complaints
- Increased social isolation, withdrawal
- Increased deceptiveness
- Aggressiveness
- Dependence, passiveness
- Bed-wetting, nightmares
- Lack of creativity and healthy exploration

## *Cognitive Effects*

- Inability to predict and make inferences
- Difficulty focusing on the content of language; language is used to keep others at a distance rather than to convey meaning
- Feeling of incompetence, risk avoidance
- Lack of sense of consistency and predictability required for sequential ordering; encodes new information episodically or not at all
- Fear of abandonment

## *Behavior to Expect*

- Loss of appetite
- Sleep disturbance
- School problems – refusal to go, truancy, poor performance
- Anxiety, fear of abandonment
- Perfectionism
- Shyness
- Increased violent behavior
- Verbal abusiveness, lying
- Regression – wanting the bottle, baby talk thumbsucking
- Tantrums