The Affects of Domestic Violence on Children

In the United States, 31% of women reported experiencing some form of domestic violence from a boyfriend or spouse during their lives. According to the Georgia Department of Human Resources, there are between 3.3 and 10 million children in the state of Georgia who witness domestic violence per year. These millions of children exposed to domestic violence do not go unscathed. Studies have shown that children living in a home with exposure to domestic violence have a higher level of anxiety than non-exposed children. These children also tend to be more depressed, and they have more externalizing problems then do their non-exposed counterparts.

Domestic violence is also related to emotional competence and the development of normal emotional response. Children who have witnessed violence between their caregivers growing up appear to be less aware of their emotions, they are less able to regulate negative affect, they have more trouble distinguishing between emotions, and they are less likely to know the cause of their emotional state. There has also been evidence to suggest that parents foster the development of emotional competence within their children. In domestically violent homes, the parents may be emotionally dysregulated, making it difficult for them to teach their children emotionally competent skills.

Since emotional regulation appears to be a problem for some children exposed to domestic violence, it is no surprise that these same children tend to have difficulty forming friendships. Children of battered women were less likely to have a best friend than were children of non-battered women. This study found that children exposed to domestic violence have a comparable amount of friends to non-exposed children, but
these friendships tended to be based on superficiality. Children exposed to domestic violence also reported more loneliness in schools. These children scored lower on measures of social competence, showed little interest in age appropriate past times, and participated in fewer group activities.

As shown above, children that are exposed to violence within their home tend to display a wide gamut of emotional and social problems. It is important that individuals who interact with children regularly, such as teachers and nurses, learn that such behaviors can be a result of exposure to domestic violence.

For further information regarding this article please contact Tiffany Pelletier at the Maternal Substance Abuse and Child Development Project, Emory University School of Medicine, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, 1256 Briarcliff Road, N.E., Suite 309W, Atlanta, Georgia, 30306. You can also phone us at 404-712-9829 or visit our website at http://www.emory.edu/MSACD

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References:


