Healing the Invisible Wounds:
Children's Exposure to Violence

What To Look For and How to Help:

**Young Children (0-6)**
- Cries more than usual
- Becomes less responsive
- Cries when you leave
- Eats more or doesn't want to eat
- Sleeps all the time or has trouble sleeping
- Has frequent temper tantrums
- Behaves like a younger child
- Asks many questions about the event
- Startles easily

**School-aged (7-11)**
- Schedule time alone with you
- Soothe by singing and rocking
- Keep a regular routine
- Use storybooks to talk about feelings
- Shield from violent TV or books
- Don't leave them with people they don't know well
- Explain what will happen ahead of time

**Adolescents**
- Cries more than usual
- Becomes less responsive
- Cries when you leave
- Eats more or doesn't want to eat
- Sleeps all the time or has trouble sleeping
- Has frequent temper tantrums
- Behaves like a younger child
- Asks many questions about the event
- Startles easily

Safe Start Center
Web: www.safestartcenter.org
E-mail: info@safestartcenter.org
Telephone: 1-800-865-0965
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What To Look For and How to Help:

**Young Children (0-6)**
- Feels responsible for or guilty about the event
- Wants to be left alone
- Seems sad all the time
- Acts very hyper or very spacey
- Gets into trouble at school and at home
- Is more aggressive; gets into fights
- Has nightmares
- Eats more or less than before

**School-aged (7-11)**
- Listen calmly, without judging
- Tell them what happened is not their fault
- Write down worries and talk about each one
- Help them find a safe place
- Don’t make hateful comments
- Teach nonviolent ways to solve problems
- Let them make some decisions

**Adolescents (12-18)**
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What To Look For and How to Help:

Young Children (0-6)
Signs
Complains about being tired
Thinks about the event all the time
Becomes more rebellious
Wants to seek revenge
Stops caring about their looks
Skips school*
Becomes violent*
Drinks and uses drugs*
Talks about dying*

What to do
Be extra patient
Ask, in private, what’s wrong
Respond calmly, without judging
Provide safe and fun activities
Encourage spending time with people they trust
Help them make a plan to stay safe
Don’t make commitments you can’t honor

School-aged (7-11)

Adolescents (12-18)

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Additional resources for parents about children's exposure to violence:

Hot Lines

Information and Resources

Books for Children

National Crime Victim Helpline
1-800-FYI-CALL (394-2255)
Interpreters in 170 languages
Information about what to do if you are the victim of a violent crime and referrals to local services.

National Domestic Violence Hotline
1-800-799-SAFE (7233)
TTY: 1-800-787-3224
Interpreters in 170 languages
Crisis intervention, safety planning, information and referrals for survivors and anyone calling on their behalf.

Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline
1-800-4-A-CHILD (422-4453)
Interpreters in 170 languages
Information, referrals to emergency and social services, and support for children and adults.

The Safe Start Center is funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.
Additional resources for parents about children's exposure to violence:

Hot Lines

Information and Resources

Books for Children

- Child Witness to Violence Project
  www.childwitnessviolence.org
- Family Communications
  www.fc.org
- Family Violence Prevention Fund
  www.endabuse.org
- National Child Traumatic Stress Network
  www.nctsn.org
- National Mental Health Information Center
  www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov
- New York University Child Study Center
  www.aboutourkids.org
- Parenting Resources, USA.gov
  www.usa.gov/Topics/Parents.shtml
- Zero to Three
  www.zerotothree.org

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Hot Lines

Information and Resources

Books for Children

Resources on Children’s Exposure to Violence

3-6 Year Olds
I Do and I Don’t, Fred Rogers and Hedda Sharapan
A Terrible Thing Happened: A Story for Children Who Have Witnessed Violence or Trauma, Margaret Holmes

7-11 Year Olds
Something Is Wrong at My House: A Book About Parents’ Fighting, Diane Davis
I Can Make My World a Safer Place, Paul Kivel

12-18 Year Olds
Autobiography of My Dead Brother, Walter Dean Myers
The Rules of Survival, Nancy Werlin
The Kids’ Guide to Working Out Conflicts: How to Keep Cool, Stay Safe, and Get Along, Naomi Drew

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