

Centralizing Children's Needs: Child Inclusive Practice in Parenting Disputes in Domestic Violence Cases

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Child Inclusive Practice

Aim

Direct involvement of child & constructive feedback to parents to enhance understanding of their child's needs & to minimize risks

Individual Child Session

- Develop understanding of:
 - Child's experience of the family separation, including exposure to conflict or violence
 - Child's development, coping capacity & adjustment
 - Family relationship dynamics
 - Child's support network
 - Child's perspectives & wishes

CHILDREN REFLECT THE WORLD IN WHICH THEY ARE RAISED

(Perry & Pollard 1998, P.35)



Adverse Effects on Children from Exposure to DV

Possible Long & Short Term Consequences:

- Serious physical, psychological, cognitive, behavioral, developmental, emotional & relational problems
- Poor life satisfaction, self esteem & future relationships
- Disrupted tasks of childhood

Adverse Effects on Children from Exposure to DV

*There is no greater hell than to be a prisoner
of fear*

(Cozolino quoting Ben Johnson, 2010, p. 258).

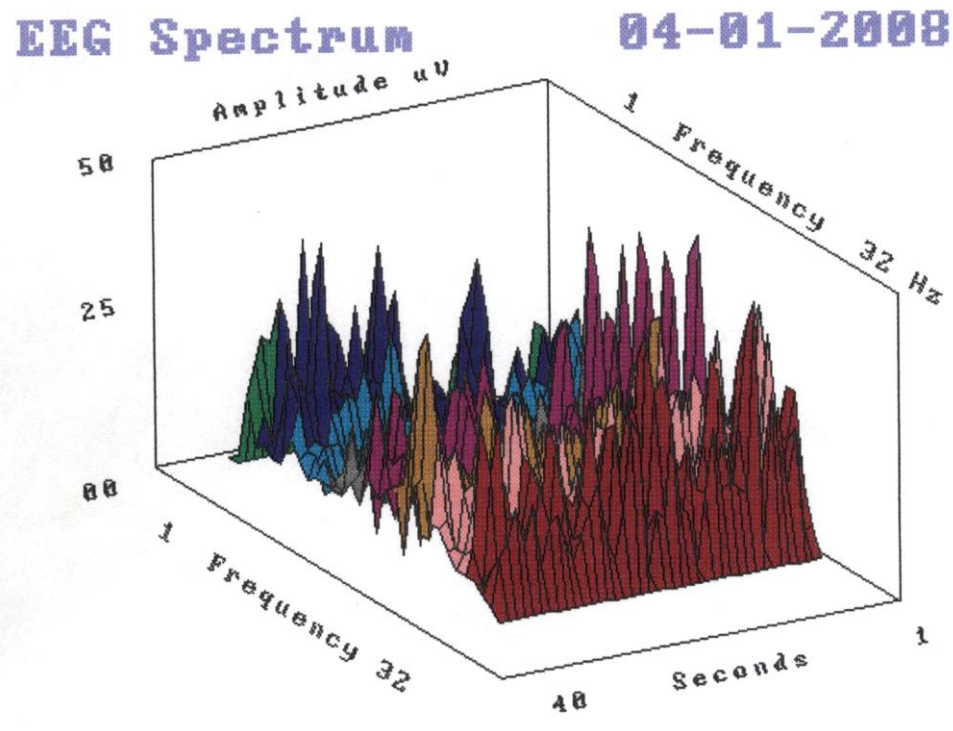
Children's Exposure to Abuse, Distress, Trauma

- **Impact:** Hyper-reactive and reflexive firing of threat-related neural systems
- **Results:** formation of non-resourceful dominant neural pathways & corresponding neural deficits
 - Dominant sensory and threat response pathways
 - Deficits in anticipatory & regulatory pathways for modulation of emotion, autonomic functions, & behaviors

(Sinnamon, 2012)

Physiology of Fear : Adrenal Alarm

EEG: Negative Emotion



Fight/ Flight/ Freeze Response:

- Energy directed for protection
- Suppresses immune system

Reasons to Include Children

Child inclusive research on children exposed to domestic violence show children:

- Want to be included in discussing future family relationships
- Coping capacity enhanced
- Feel recognized, heard, & understood
- Overcome fear of disclosure
- Build hope for their future

The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children

- **Protecting children is everyone's responsibility**
- **Emphasis on early intervention and prevention in assisting children & families**
- **Contact with all services offers an opportunity for innovative cross sector collaborative practice**

Some Inherent Challenges for Practitioners

Many inborn challenges in CIP in cases where domestic violence is an issue:

Each case is unique

Risk identification and management – risk is never static

Families often have multiple and complex needs

Some Inherent Challenges for Practitioners

- Screen for appropriateness for CIP:
 - Parents' cognitive capacity & emotional functioning
 - Relational dynamics – potency & pattern of violence
- Manage power imbalance & complex needs
- Prepare parents to appropriately invite child
- Child session:
 - Engage anxious child & explore relevant sensitive information
 - Aware of & manage signs of trauma
- Provide constructive & safe feedback to parents that addresses child's needs
- Motivate parents to follow up with recommended referrals for self or child



- What children experience effects how they mature and function as adults
(Perry 2000)
- Change is possible. Let's collaborate to develop child inclusive best practice to address each vulnerable child's needs