



carinity
Baptist Community Services

Child Victims of Domestic Violence Post-Separation

Overview

- Why do we need to talk about children and DV, post separation ?
- To include or not include children in decision making ?

Why do we need to talk about children?

- More likely to occur in couples with children – often commencing in pregnancy. (Taft, 2002)
- 80% of women who experience Domestic Violence have children.
- 50% of men who frequently assault their partners also directly abuse their children. (Straus & Gelles, 1996)
- Children are at risk from DV – from the very beginning of life.
- Children are not separate from DV and DV is not separate from parenting.

Child Victims

What is Child Abuse?

A pattern of behaviours that cause a constant state of fear and interrupt normal child development.

What is Domestic Violence?

A pattern of behaviours.

Designed to control and have power over.

One person is afraid of the other.



Bad Partner but Good Dad?

DV and parenting are directly linked

- It has been argued that men who perpetrate family violence cannot be fully responsible parents, as **exposing children to domestic violence is in itself abusive** (Brancroft & Silverman, 2002).

Through the child's eyes: An abusive partner is an abusive parent



DV undermines mother child attachment. (Humphreys & Stanley 2006)

Children are not resilient they are malleable both for good and for bad.

(Siegel, 2014)

The biggest risk in child development is multiple adverse events - coupled with less than adequate or harmful care giving. (Perry, 2009)

DV is both of these things.



A father who is meant to love and care for you is also the source of fear and abuse.

Post Separation Power and Control Wheel



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- Using physical & sexual violence against mother and children
- Using harassment & intimidation
- Undermining her ability to parent
- Discrediting her as a mother
- Withholding financial support
- Endangering children
- Disregarding children
- Disrupting her relationships with children



Child abuse casts a
shadow the length
of a lifetime.

-Herbert Ward

- Separation is not a vaccine against domestic violence (Holt, 2013).
- DV does not end after separation for the adult victims.
- **DV does not end after separation for child victims...and often they continue to have contact with the perpetrator without a protective adult present.**
- Children continue to be abused on contact.

The dilemma for the protective parent

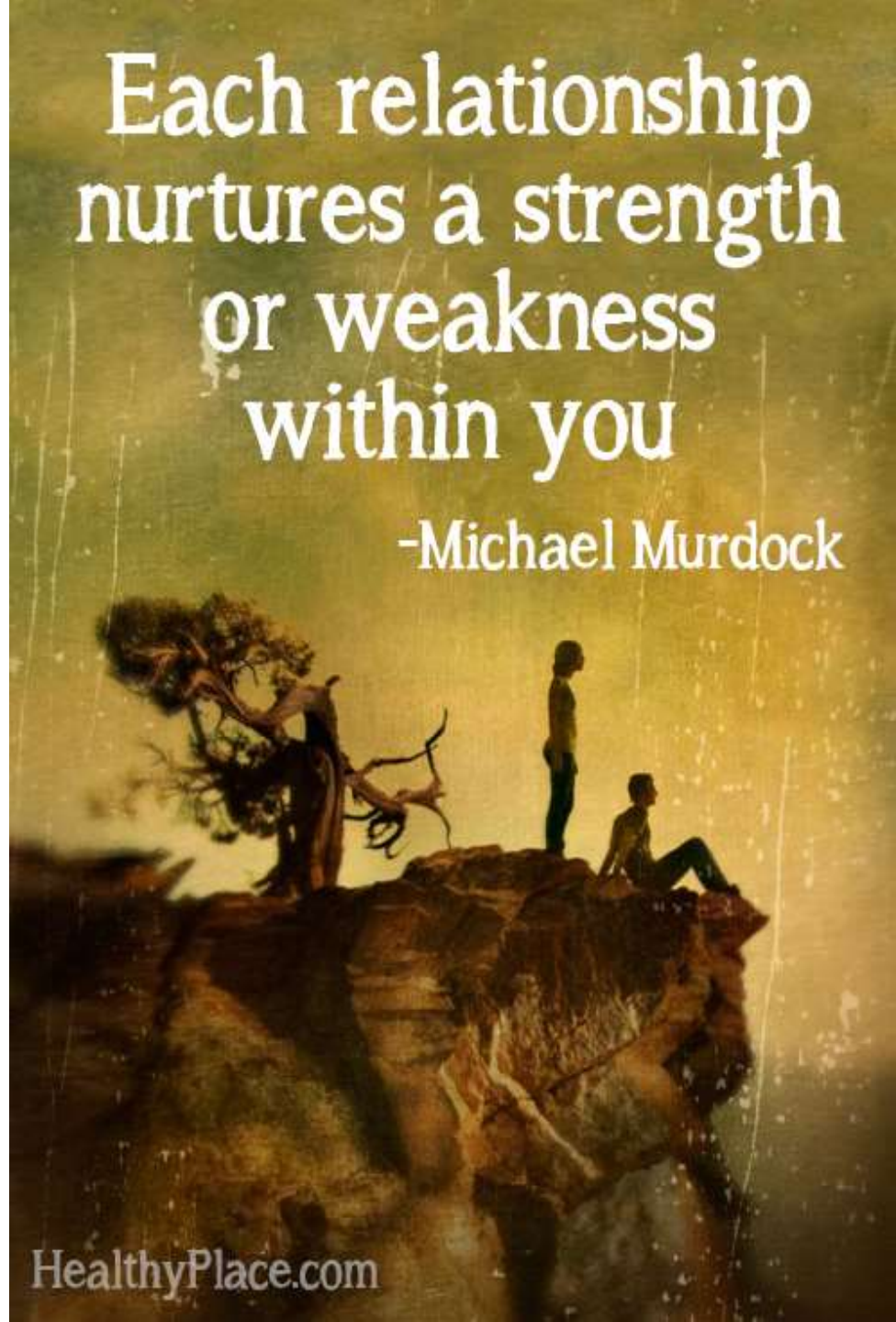
When the parents lived together, the mother could be protective, and mitigate some of these risks. Who will protect the children from harm now?

Are children more at risk before or after separation?



Each relationship
nurtures a strength
or weakness
within you

-Michael Murdock



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How do we consult children and assess risk?



Methods
Child inclusive !
Child centred !



Consulting children and making safe parenting orders?

- Do we involve children in the decision making?
- If so, how do we involve children?
- How do we hear the child's voice?
- What are children telling us by what they are saying and what are they not saying?

What children will tell safe adults?



- Children talk to people they know and trust ... seldom do they open up to strangers no matter how good your rapport building skills are.
- Children will not open up if the perpetrator is present.
- Children who experience abuse do not trust adults to keep them safe.



What children will tell safe adults?



What children will say...

They will be ambivalent

- They are afraid
- They miss dad, and they want to see him- very few abused children say they don't want to see their parents.
- Children disclose little bits of information over long periods of time.
- Children talk about abuse often because they want the abuse to stop, but they still want the relationship.

What children will not tell safe adults?



Children will **not** say...

- I have been abused – they often lack terminology they may believe it is normal, deserved or special.

Children may stop making disclosures because...

‘no one listened’

‘no one stopped the abuse’

‘Talking about it didn’t change anything’



How do we hear from children?

- We need to hear the Childs voice
- Make the child the centre of decision making.
Listen to and hear the child.
 - It may or may not mean directly talking to the child.



- Talk to other key people and gather a range of perspectives.
 - e.g. parents, extending family, teachers, counsellors.



SAY NO
TO
VIOLENCE