



## Empowering Children

**Help prevent child abuse.** Teach your children about their boundaries and rights to privacy. Stress that it is important not to keep secrets from you about things that happen to them. Believe your children. If your partner is violent to your children, involve the police or child protective services.

**Take care of yourself.** To invest energy into your relationship with your children, it's important that you get enough sleep, nutrition, and exercise and have adequate adult support systems. Maintain a healthy balance between work and family life. Learn and practice coping skills, such as stress reduction, communication skills, and problem solving. Accept help when you feel overwhelmed or stressed.

**Practice effective parenting.** Create a consistent and predictable home environment. Set clear rules and consequences for breaking them. Use discipline to give instruction, not punish. Spend time in activities with your children. Don't be afraid to admit mistakes; admitting our mistakes teaches children how to do the same.

**Give your children opportunities to express themselves.** Talk often with your children, and listen when they talk. Talk and act in a manner that children feel safe and comfortable expressing themselves. Treat all questions with respect and seriousness. Use art, music, drama, and play to help children express their emotions and ideas. At the same time, respect their right to silence.

**Avoid hitting your child.** It is especially important to avoid hitting or spanking children who are exposed to domestic violence in the home. Spanking sends the message to the child that it's ok for people you love to hurt you and that aggression is justifiable. Avoid reinforcing the messages that your abusive partner is sending to the children by choosing not to use corporal punishment.

**Help children build relationships with other children and adults.** Encourage children to participate in activities with their peers. Help your children identify adults they can trust, and reassure them that it is ok to talk to someone when they are upset or hurt.

**Teach children communication, coping, and problem-solving skills.** Listen to children and provide them with space and respect. Rather than speaking on behalf of your children, brainstorm with them on how they might address a matter of conflict using their own words.

**Please call the 24-Hour National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or TTY 1-800-787-3224 to discuss your concerns and questions.**