



# HEAR OUR VOICES

**Stories of Children Exposed to Domestic Violence**

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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**1 Introduction**

**4 Guide for Facilitators**

**8 Sample Agenda**

**Discussion Guides**

9 Marisa's Story

12 Danielle's Story

15 Jamie's Story

18 Carlos' Story

21 Mayra's Story

**24 Specific Discussion Questions for Policy Makers**

**25 Substance Abuse and Domestic Violence**

**26 Resources**

# INTRODUCTION

By Linda M. Perez, Ph.D.

These digital stories, offered by the young people who lived them, illuminate children's exposure to domestic violence as a complex source of pain and vulnerability. Both the courage to tell and the eagerness to teach are woven into the intention of these stories. These young storytellers emphasize the pain of past generations and their own identification with current parental suffering.

**"These untoward experiences can negatively impact the very function of the human nervous system"**

These stories remind us that distressed children, raised in persistent fear and unable to access their caregivers as a source of comfort, are at high risk for developmental trauma. It is well established that children are vulnerable to the detrimental affects of chaotic and relationally impoverished environments. These untoward experiences can negatively impact the very function of the human nervous system, which then influence affect, cognitive mental processes, and behavior over a lifetime.

Taken as a whole, these videos examine the following vital issues: 1) the isolation and fear children experience when they are surrounded by violence; 2) children exposed to domestic violence bear the pain of past generations; 3) the

shame that goes with domestic violence and the inability to talk about or make sense of the violence; 4) the probable escalation of brutality when domestic violence is ignored and untreated; 5) vulnerable populations may turn to alcohol and drugs to cope with stressful life conditions; and 6) the ability of children when they have the opportunity to express their feelings to caring others to develop adaptive behaviors associated with positive outcomes.

Beginning with Marisa, we observe how her father's exposure to the violent death of his own mother diminished his life and those of his family members decades later. Not allowed to express his pain, the father turned to drugs as a way to cope with his unresolved grief and traumatic

**“Jamie’s story indicates that if domestic violence is ignored and goes untreated it tends to escalate in frequency and brutality.”**

stress. Marisa’s father continued his family’s cycle of violence and emotionally and physically abused her mother. Unlike some abused women, Marisa’s mother had the psychological resources and family support to break the cycle of domestic violence. In so doing, she protected Marisa from physical and psychological danger, and helped her to develop adaptive coping behaviors and the strength to assert her own will.

In Danielle’s story, we observe how untreated abuse perpetuates itself as we watch her mother go from one abusive relationship to the next. Hearing her narrative reminds us that children identify with parental suffering and that being either the recipient or the witness to domestic violence compounds the effects of trauma and the risk of psychological problems. Effectively, as the traumatic response was uninterrupted while untreated, it undermined both Danielle and her mother’s abilities to cope with the brutality. As a result, the mother responded with helplessness and depression, and Danielle responded by developing behavioral problems and abusing drugs in order to regulate her post trauma anxiety.

Jamie’s story indicates that if domestic violence is ignored and goes untreated it tends to escalate in frequency and brutality. Her account suggests the mother’s shame and focus on mere existence,

reinforced the isolation and fear she endured since childhood. Unable to speak of the violence, Jamie’s mother used alcohol to medicate against the increased cruelty. Instead of helping her to cope, the alcohol contributed to the mother’s profound feelings of helplessness and furthered her downward spiral. Jamie however, was able to develop strategies to effectively cope with the violence. Her ability to diffuse her stepfather’s violence represents an adaptive coping behavior necessary to grow up in a dangerous environment, and is considered a form of competence for emotional stability in this context. Still, we are left with the pain in her voice.

As we listen to Carlos’ story, we hear that his mother stayed in an abusive marriage while she also possessed the personal fortitude to raise six children and to work outside the home. She had the strength to stand up to the abuse, the commitment to keep her family together, and the hope that the abuse would end. One can only guess, but perhaps it was the fear of the unknown and lack of social support that prevented her from leaving. What we do know is that Carlos, like Jamie, developed strategies to protect his mother. Yet, when faced with the persistent lack of control that is associated with witnessing violence towards his caregiver, Carlos sought his own refuge in a different kind of violence—gang activity. It was not until social and educational sup-

**“The benefit for each storyteller in telling his/her story, even though at times painful, is profound.”**

ports were available that Carlos was able to draw on his own inner resources to transform unfavorable experiences into positive results.

Mayra’s story portrays the conflicting beliefs and emotions children experience when they awake nightly to the cries of their mother being beaten, but live daily with the outward appearance of the “perfect family”. Hearing Mayra informs us that not talking about the violence is one way individuals cut themselves off from the feelings associated with violence and banish them from consciousness. Ending with Mayra, we come full-circle in learning domestic violence can end, enabling families to live more peacefully. Still, in its wake are the traumatic memories that replay each time Mayra hears the cries of another child.

The benefit for each storyteller in telling his/her story, even though at times painful, is profound. Vulnerable youth who were once caught in a hopeless cycle of violence, find their voices, create new outcomes and even call for community action!

These real life stories challenges each of us to not only deepen our individual compassion, but to increase our communal accountability—to stop the cycle of domestic violence.

**To all recipients and witnesses to domestic violence, past and present,**

**Linda M. Perez, Ph.D.**

*Linda M. Perez, Ph.D., is an associate professor of child development, Mills College, and a clinical psychologist practicing in the area of childhood trauma.*

# GUIDELINES FOR FACILITATORS

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The objective of this digital storytelling discussion guide is to increase understanding about the impact of exposure to domestic violence (DV) on children and young people and provide specific strategies for supporting them. Suggested audiences for viewing stories and participating in discussions include groups of social service professionals, policy makers, community members, faith providers, youth workers, and volunteers.

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## Facilitator Role

Discussions about domestic violence, and exposure to domestic violence, should be led by facilitators knowledgeable about the topic and experienced in supporting people as they explore sensitive issues (with consultation from other experts on DV). The role of the facilitator includes the following:

- Create an emotionally safe environment for talking about exposure to domestic violence;
- Clarify discussion goals;
- Ensure that all participants feel invited to participate in the discussion;
- Share accurate information about exposure to domestic violence with participants;
- Ensure that participants understand how to respond when they discover that a child or young person with whom they work or who they know is being exposed to domestic violence;
- Disseminate relevant community resources/referrals to participants.

The questions in the discussion guide have been selected to emphasize the importance of appropriate prevention and intervention strategies. The CD contains a number of resources that offer information and tools for supporting children who have been impacted by domestic violence.

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## **Pre-Discussion Planning**

The DVD contains digital stories about very difficult life experiences. Some of the stories describe situations that were quite brutal. Facilitators **MUST** view the stories, and discuss them with other experts on domestic violence\*, **BEFORE** they show them to a group. The stories contain many layers of content, and any one of them could sustain a fairly lengthy discussion. Facilitators should expect to spend at least forty five-minutes viewing and discussing each story, and completing the role play. The stories can be emotionally draining to watch and discuss, so you may want to limit the number of stories that are presented at one time.

Facilitators will need to prepare an agenda (see Sample Agenda) for the presentation/discussion and research and prepare three types of community resources. The Resources section provides websites, articles and books with specific information that can be tailored for participants.

First, facilitators will need information about relevant directions in policy that should be pursued when engaging audiences that are involved with systems level change (see “Specific Discussion Questions for Policy Makers” section).

Second, facilitators will need to gather resources for participants that provide social services. They need information about intervention strategies for children and youth who may have been exposed to domestic violence.

Third, facilitators should have resources that can be offered if participants disclose that they were exposed to domestic violence as children/young people, or if participants disclose that they are currently in an abusive relationship.

\*DV experts are available through your local DV agency or through the national DV hotline (see Resources)

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## **Facilitating the Discussion**

The discussion guide has a number of components. The remainder of the facilitator guide will review each one.

The story synopsis for each piece will give facilitators a sense of the degree of difficulty of the content. Facilitators must exercise judgment about the appropriateness of each story for their particular audience.

Creating group agreements about how the group will interact is recommended in order to foster a sense of safety during discussions (see sample agenda). Having agreements will clarify the amount of engagement expected from participants. It will also remind them that the subject matter is sensitive and that they need to honor the contributions of their fellow group members by listening, refraining from sidebar conversations, and in general, being respectful.

Some participants will have been personally affected by domestic violence, and some may currently be experiencing violence. They may or may not disclose this to the group. Either way, as the group discussion proceeds, it is important to honor individuals who do not want to participate.

The discussion guide also includes a definition of domestic violence, to serve as a starting point for a conversation about exposure to domestic violence. Facilitators should review the definition and respond to questions about it.



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## Discussion Questions

The set of questions that first appear after each story in the discussion guide are intended to give participants time to process their own reaction to the stories. The facilitator should be prepared to break a larger group into pairs to give everybody a chance to discuss their reactions to the stories. Individuals who do not wish to participate should be honored.

The next set of questions focuses on different aspects of exposure to domestic violence. Many of the questions require incorporating information about coping strategies for young people at different developmental stages, and developmentally appropriate interventions for different age groups (See Resources—“Little Eyes, Little Ears: How Violence against a Mother Shapes Children as they Grow” for information on developmental stages. [http://www.lfcc.on.ca/little\\_eyes\\_little\\_ears.html](http://www.lfcc.on.ca/little_eyes_little_ears.html)).

Topics that can be addressed through the discussion guide include: the cycle of violence from one generation to the next; how children develop their understanding of relationship violence; the co-occurrence of domestic violence and child abuse; how to support parents who want to protect their children from the effects of domestic violence; and involvement in the juvenile justice system of children exposed to domestic violence.

The conclusion of the discussion should focus on giving participants a sense of empowerment—they should leave with a greater awareness of the impact of exposure to domestic violence, a clear sense of what to do when they suspect that a child or young person with whom they are associated is being exposed to domestic violence, and/or opportunities for changes in practice or policy with their own organizations or systems. Reviewing the case study, or actually performing the role play when there is time, should lead to a discussion of various ways to support young people.

# SAMPLE AGENDA

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**I. Introduction of Facilitator and Participants**

**II. Overview of Material**

**III. Group Agreements**

(suggested agreements include: no speaking out of turn, no sidebar conversations, listen to each participant, avoid negative body language, respect participants' request to decline to participate)

**IV. Ask participants about their understanding of domestic violence. Propose the following definition so that the discussion proceeds with a common understanding of domestic violence:**

*Domestic violence is a pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviors—including physical, sexual, and psychological attacks, and economic coercion—that an adult uses against an intimate partner. This pattern of serious assault is most typically exercised by men against a female partner and sometimes against their children. These assaults are often repetitive and continuous and may leave women and children feeling dazed and bereft. Domestic violence is often the result of perpetrators feeling that they have little power or control and attempting to gain power by controlling the victim through violence.*

**V. View Story**

(if more than one story is viewed, watch, debrief and analyze one story at a time)

**VI. Debrief in Small Groups**

**VII. Discussion of Content of Story**

**VIII. Role Play or Case Study**

**VIX. Conclusions**

Identify organizations in the community that can provide supportive services to children exposed to domestic violence and their caregivers, and provide a contact number for each organization and instructions on how make sure services can be accessed.

# MARISA'S STORY



## Synopsis

Marisa speaks of her family's history with domestic violence, the effect it had on her father, and the steps her mother has taken to stop the cycle of violence for her and her siblings. Marisa's grandmother died as a victim of domestic violence. Marisa's father witnessed the violence as a child. As an adult, he became abusive toward Marisa's mother. While pregnant a third time with Marisa, her mother left her father, determined not to expose her newborn child to the cycle of violence. Marisa talks about her understanding of the effects of domestic violence, and what it means to her that she has been raised free of violence.

**This story contains difficult material, but ends on a positive note.**

## Defining Domestic Violence

Ask participants about their understanding of domestic violence. Propose the following definition so that the discussion proceeds with a common understanding of the issue:

*Domestic violence is a pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviors—including physical, sexual, and psychological attacks, and economic coercion—that an adult uses against an intimate partner. This pattern of serious assault is most typically exercised by men against a female partner and sometimes against their children. These assaults are often repetitive and continuous and may leave women and children feeling dazed and bereft. Domestic violence is often the result of perpetrators feeling that they have little power or control and attempting to gain power by controlling the victim through violence.*

## Debrief for Participants

In groups larger than 5 or 6 people, have participants break out into small groups of two or three to discuss the following questions as needed.

- In the storyteller's words, what happened to the storyteller?
- How do you think she felt?
- Let's take a minute to describe your experience after viewing the story. How did the story make you feel?
- What in your own words is Marisa's story?

## Questions for Marisa's Story

- Based on Marisa's story, in what way do you think her father's history contributed to his nature?
- How does Marisa's mother protect her children from the effects of domestic violence?
- What resiliency factors can you identify from the story that help Marisa successfully navigate her adolescence?
- What can be done to help mothers protect their children from the impact of domestic violence?
- What lessons did you learn from this story?

## Role Play/ Case Study

*Once a week, four-year old Jennifer and her eight-year old brother accompany their mother, who has recently left their father, to a support group for survivors of domestic violence that you facilitate. They play in the hall together, while the group meets. You notice that the mother has to leave frequently because Jennifer is crying. Her brother stomps around and acts annoyed with his sister and his mother. How could you help support all three of them?*

Analyze the role play or case study by asking the participants the following questions:

- What strategies can you use to connect with each member of the family? Base your answers on their role in the family, and their developmental stage, as appropriate.
- If this was happening in your community, what types of **services** are available that could be helpful to each member of the family?
- What is the most important **action** your community could take to reduce exposure to domestic violence?
- What system changes in your community would make it easier to reach young people who are exposed to domestic violence and their families with services that support them?

## Conclusion

- On flip chart paper, list services and actions identified in previous activity.
- Go around the group of participants, ask each person what they felt was most helpful about viewing and analyzing the stories.
- Provide list of community resources and additional informational material to participants.

## DANIELLE'S STORY



### Synopsis

Danielle tells the story of being exposed to domestic violence from very early on—her mother was running away from her abusive father when she was born. Danielle's earliest memories are of her stepfather, who was very violent towards her and her mother. She took on the parental role in her family because neither her father nor her mother could take care of her siblings. She describes how her stepfather is an alcoholic and her mother suffers from postpartum depression. Danielle eventually went into foster care, and she talks about the challenges she has had with drug addiction, mental health, and the criminal justice system. Her parting message is that child abuse and domestic violence must be stopped.

**This story contains very difficult material to watch.**

### Defining Domestic Violence

Ask participants about their understanding of domestic violence. Propose the following definition so that the discussion proceeds with a common understanding of the issue:

*Domestic violence is a pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviors—including physical, sexual, and psychological attacks, and economic coercion—that an adult uses against an intimate partner. This pattern of serious assault is most typically exercised by men against a female partner and sometimes against their children. These assaults are often repetitive and continuous and may leave women and children feeling dazed and bereft. Domestic violence is often the result of perpetrators feeling that they have little power or control and attempting to gain power by controlling the victim through violence.*

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## Debrief for Participants

In groups larger than 5 or 6 people, have participants break out into small groups of two or three to discuss the following questions as needed.

- In the storyteller's words, what happened to the storyteller?
- How do you think she felt?
- Let's take a minute to describe your experience after viewing the story. How did the story make you feel?
- What in your own words is Danielle's story?

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## Questions for Danielle's Story

- In Danielle's case it is difficult to separate the impact of exposure to domestic violence from the child abuse she endured. How was Danielle affected by all this violence?
- What positive and negative coping strategies did she use?
- How could teachers and school administrators, social workers, health care providers, and staff from the criminal justice system have supported Danielle during her formative years?
- What lessons did you learn from this story?

## Role Play/ Case Study

*A teacher calls you for help because she is worried about one of the girls in her 8<sup>th</sup> grade class. The girl has always done well in school, but lately she has stopped coming to school, and has been tearful when she does arrive. Her mother comes in for a conference. She looks tired and the five-year old that accompanies her won't stop screaming. What can you do?*

Analyze the role play or case study by asking the participants the following questions:

- What strategies can staff use to connect with each member of the family? Base your answers on each person's role in the family, and their developmental stage.
- How might you broach the subject of domestic violence with this mother? What approaches might be most successful in getting her services and support?
- If this was happening in your community, what types of **services** are available that could be helpful to each member of the family?
- What is the most important **action** your community could take to reduce exposure to domestic violence?
- What system changes in your community would make it easier to reach young people who are exposed to domestic violence and their families with services that support them?

## Conclusion

- On flip chart paper, list services and actions identified in previous activity.
- Go around the group of participants, ask each person what they felt was most helpful about viewing and analyzing the stories.
- Provide list of community resources and additional informational material to participants.



# JAMIE'S STORY



## Synopsis

Jamie lived with her alcoholic mother and violent step-father from the time she was a small child. She remembers diffusing her father's violence by distracting him as he stood over her mother with a knife when she was three years old. Her father was brutal—he repeatedly left her mother with serious injuries—but nobody in the family ever talked about it. Eventually, Jamie's mother did leave her step-father, but her life spiraled further out of control due to her alcohol addiction. As an adult, Jamie examines the incredibly painful task of cutting ties completely with her mother in order to save herself and move on with her own life.

**This story contains very difficult material to watch**

## Defining Domestic Violence

Ask participants about their understanding of domestic violence. Propose the following definition so that the discussion proceeds with a common understanding of the issue:

*Domestic violence is a pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviors—including physical, sexual, and psychological attacks, and economic coercion—that an adult uses against an intimate partner. This pattern of serious assault is most typically exercised by men against a female partner and sometimes against their children. These assaults are often repetitive and continuous and may leave women and children feeling dazed and bereft. Domestic violence is often the result of perpetrators feeling that they have little power or control and attempting to gain power by controlling the victim through violence.*

## Debrief for Participants

In groups larger than 5 or 6 people, have participants break out into small groups of two or three to discuss the following questions as needed.

- In the storyteller's words, what happened to the storyteller?
- How do you think she felt?
- Let's take a minute to describe your experience after viewing the story. How did the story make you feel?
- What in your own words is Jamie's story?

## Questions for Jamie's Story

- Describe the different ways in which domestic violence affected Jamie's childhood.
- Jamie says "people try to say men who commit violence are hurting." What do you think she means?
- What types of intervention efforts directed at Jamie during her childhood could have made a difference in the way the situation ultimately came out? Describe different interventions for different developmental stages.\*
- What types of intervention efforts could have been directed towards Jamie's mother?
- What do you think Jamie means, when she says that her mother was "broken"?
- What types of patterns and understandings about relationships learned from childhood would Jamie need to overcome in order to lead an emotionally healthy adult life?
- What lessons did you learn from this story?

\*See Resources—"Little Eyes, Little Ears: How Violence against a Mother Shapes Children as they Grow" for information on developmental stages. [http://www.lfcc.on.ca/little\\_eyes\\_little\\_ears.html](http://www.lfcc.on.ca/little_eyes_little_ears.html)

## Role Play/ Case Study

*Three-year old Jaqueline always arrives at her day care very tired. Her mother or stepfather drop her off. The mother looks as tired as Jaqueline and is very vague about her answers when the daycare provider brings up the topic of Jaqueline needing to get more sleep. The stepfather seems to adore Jaqueline, even though he is always speaking derisively about her mother. Jaqueline alternates between being very aggressive in her play at daycare and acting withdrawn. What can the daycare provider do?*

Analyze the role play or case study by asking the participants the following questions:

- What about this scenario would lead you to think that domestic violence might be an issue?
- What strategies can staff use to connect with each member of the family? Base your answers on each person's role in the family, and their developmental stage, when appropriate.
- If this was happening in your community, what types of **services** are available that could be helpful to each member of the family?
- What is the most important **action** your community could take to reduce exposure to domestic violence?
- What system changes in your community would make it easier to reach young people who are exposed to domestic violence and their families with services that support them?

## Conclusion

- On flip chart paper, list services and actions identified in previous activity.
- Go around the group of participants, ask each person what they felt was most helpful about viewing and analyzing the stories.
- Provide list of community resources and additional informational material to participants.

## CARLOS' STORY



### Synopsis

Carlos' first memory of his parents is of a fight between them. He talks about a hard childhood—his mom worked outside the home in addition to raising six children. Carlos remembers good times along with the violence between his parents. He tried to protect his mother from his father by talking to him late into the night. As a teenager, Carlos escaped the chaos of his home by becoming involved with a second family—a gang. His description of what he needed and got from the gang highlights the importance he placed on having control over his life. Most of his friends were killed. He ended up going to prison and then getting a high school diploma, extracting himself from the life of street violence, learning to live free from violence, and teaching young people to avoid the traps he fell into.

**This story contains moderately difficult material to watch**

### Defining Domestic Violence

Ask participants about their understanding of domestic violence. Propose the following definition so that the discussion proceeds with a common understanding of the issue:

*Domestic violence is a pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviors—including physical, sexual, and psychological attacks, and economic coercion—that an adult uses against an intimate partner. This pattern of serious assault is most typically exercised by men against a female partner and sometimes against their children. These assaults are often repetitive and continuous and may leave women and children feeling dazed and bereft. Domestic violence is often the result of perpetrators feeling that they have little power or control and attempting to gain power by controlling the victim through violence.*

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## Debrief for Participants

In groups larger than 5 or 6 people, have participants break out into small groups of two or three to discuss the following questions as needed.

- In the storyteller's words, what happened to the storyteller?
- How do you think he felt?
- Let's take a minute to describe your experience after viewing the story. How did the story make you feel?
- What in your own words is Carlos' story?

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## Questions for Carlos' Story

- What aspects of life in his home created stress and the "feeling of having no control" that Carlos describes in his story?
- How did Carlos cope as a young child with the violence in his home?
- As he entered adolescence, Carlos joined a gang. How did the domestic violence in his home contribute to this decision?
- Was the cycle of violence interrupted with Carlos?
- What challenges does Carlos face in his attempt to break the pattern of domestic violence?

## Role Play/ Case Study

*Fourteen-year old Brian and his brother Jacob who is sixteen go to the local Community Center after school. The staff finds it difficult to connect with them. Brian appears at the Center almost every day. Sometimes he is irritable and starts arguments with staff and other kids. He is very good at sports, but often flies into a rage when he feels like a play was unfair. He sometimes does not come when he has managed to tag along with Jacob and his friends. Jacob has stopped coming regularly in the past year. When staff ask him what's going on, he says that he is going to a friend's house to do homework. He also has to accompany his mother to various doctor's appointments, or help her with housework. Brian and Jacob's mother has a difficulty finding time to come in to meet with staff. She says that she needs to be home to look after her husband. Also, she can never give permission for her sons to participate in activities without checking with her husband.*

Analyze the role play or case study by asking the participants the following questions:

- What strategies can staff at the Community Center use to connect with each member of the family? Base your answers on each person's role in the family, and their developmental stage, when appropriate.
- If this was happening in your community, what types of **services** are available that could be helpful to each member of the family?
- What is the most important **action** your community could take to reduce exposure to domestic violence?
- What system changes in your community would make it easier to reach young people who are exposed to domestic violence and their families with services that support them?

## Conclusion

- On flip chart paper, list services and actions identified in previous activity.
- Go around the group of participants, ask each person what they felt was most helpful about viewing and analyzing the stories.
- Provide list of community resources and additional informational material to participants.



## MAYRA'S STORY

### Synopsis

In a story peppered with Spanish, Mayra describes her experience with domestic violence while growing up in a seemingly perfect Mexican family. She talks about her father threatening to leave and hitting her mother, and about her mother's anguished reaction. The situation is never exposed, nobody ever talks about it. By the time Mayra tells the story, the situation has changed and her father seems to no longer be a threat. She speaks of being able to talk to him about anything, except for the violence of her childhood which continues to haunt her.

**This story contains moderately difficult material to watch**

### Defining Domestic Violence

Ask participants about their understanding of domestic violence. Propose the following definition so that the discussion proceeds with a common understanding of the issue:

*Domestic violence is a pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviors—including physical, sexual, and psychological attacks, and economic coercion—that an adult uses against an intimate partner. This pattern of serious assault is most typically exercised by men against a female partner and sometimes against their children. These assaults are often repetitive and continuous and may leave women and children feeling dazed and bereft. Domestic violence is often the result of perpetrators feeling that they have little power or control and attempting to gain power by controlling the victim through violence.*

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## Debrief for Participants

In groups larger than 5 or 6 people, have participants break out into small groups of two or three to discuss the following questions as needed.

- In the storyteller's words, what happened to the storyteller?
- How do you think she felt?
- Let's take a minute to describe your experience after viewing the story. How did the story make you feel?
- What in your own words is Mayra's story?

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## Questions for Mayra's Story

- Mayra describes how her family has never discussed her father's abuse towards her mother. What is the impact of this silence on Mayra and her family?
- Mayra says that "people don't like to get involved; they believe it's better if no one knows." Why is that harmful? How does this help or hinder families who experience domestic violence? How does this impact the community?
- What could you have done to help Mayra if you had known her at Church or were her neighbor? What is the role in the faith community in addressing domestic violence?
- How could the family's language, cultural background and immigration status have impacted the services that Mayra could have received?
- At the end of the story, Mayra reveals that she is close to her father despite his violence towards her mother earlier in their marriage. What are the positive aspects of this situation? What types of negative consequences could it have?
- What lessons did you learn from this story?



## Role Play/ Case Study

*Your daughter Olivia is very close to her best friend Jenny (both age 13). They slip notes to each other at school, they're on the same soccer team and Jenny sleeps over at your house at least once a week. Olivia has told you that she can't go to Jenny's to sleep over because her parents often work evenings. It's always been hard to talk to her mother because you don't speak Spanish. Summer vacation has just started and Olivia invites Jenny to a much anticipated trip to the beach. Jenny spends the night before the outing at your house. The next morning you stop by her house to pick up the swimsuit she forgot. As you arrive her father is shouting angrily at her mother in Spanish as he drives away. Her normally sharply dressed mother is red-eyed and disheveled, and ducks back inside the house with barely a wave. Jenny looks scared, but she goes inside and quickly returns with her suit. When you ask what's going on she says that it's nothing. You notice that Jenny is quiet that day—she goes along with Olivia's games, but does not seem very engaged. What can you do?*

Analyze the role play or case study by asking the participants the following questions:

- What strategies can you use to connect with each member of the family? Base your answers on their role in the family, and their developmental stage, when appropriate.
- If this was happening in your community, what types of **services** are available that could be helpful to each member of the family?
- What is the most important **action** your community could take to reduce exposure to domestic violence?
- What system changes in your community would make it easier to reach young people who are exposed to domestic violence and their families with services that support them?

## Conclusion

- On flip chart paper, list services and actions identified in previous activity.
- Go around the group of participants, ask each person what they felt was most helpful about viewing and analyzing the stories.
- Provide list of community resources and additional informational material to participants.

## Specific Discussion Questions For Policy Makers

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**Marisa** What policies would be supportive to mothers who want to protect their children from the effects of domestic violence?

**Danielle** How could your local jurisdiction or the state improve the criminal justice system and police response to keep children and their mothers safer?

**Jamie** What kinds of protocols and regulations within the health care system might help support young people in situations similar to Jamie's?

**Carlos** How should different "systems" (i.e. criminal justice, social services, health, education) intersect in order to offer support to youth like Carlos? What types of structures could be put in place to facilitate the coordination of these different systems?

**Mayra** What types of programs would support immigrant families in which children are exposed to domestic violence?

# Substance Abuse and Domestic Violence

There are many ways of looking at the overlap between domestic violence and substance abuse. According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV):

While substance abuse does not cause domestic violence, there is a statistical connection between the two issues. Studies of domestic violence frequently indicate high rates of alcohol and other drug use. Not only do abusers tend to be heavy users but victims of abuse also have a high probability of using alcohol and drugs. While substance abuse can interfere with violence intervention treatment, violent behavior can also interfere with substance abuse treatment. The issues of domestic violence and substance abuse are separate issues, but they can interact and exacerbate each other\*.

## What You Should Know

- Domestic violence and drug and alcohol addiction frequently occur together but are two separate and distinct problems. One does not cause the other.
- A Department of Justice study on murder within families found that more than half of the defendants accused of murdering their spouses had been drinking alcohol at the time of the murder.
- When a batterer drinks, the rate of serious injuries associated with the violence increases.
- While abstinence from drugs and alcohol does not alter battering behavior, substance abuse problems negatively affect a batterer's capacity to change and increase the chance that violence will occur.
- Chronic alcohol abuse has a higher correlation with violent behavior than an episode of acute intoxication.
- 40% of convicted batterers report being raised by parents who abused drugs or alcohol or reported a history of alcoholism.

\* "Domestic Violence and Substance Abuse Facts," adapted with permission by the Public Policy Office of the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. <http://www.ncadv.org/files/SubstanceAbuse.pdf>

## RESOURCES: CHILDREN EXPOSED TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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CONTRA COSTA COUNTY DOMESTIC  
VIOLENCE HOTLINE  
STAND! Against Domestic Violence  
Crisis Hotline: 1-888-215-5555  
[www.standagainstdv.org](http://www.standagainstdv.org)

NATIONAL DOMESTIC  
VIOLENCE HOTLINE  
1-800-799-SAFE  
1-800-787-3224 (tty)

### Local Resources

Bay Area Legal Aid  
[www.baylegal.org](http://www.baylegal.org)  
1-510-250-5270

Contra Costa Crisis Center  
[www.crisis-center.org](http://www.crisis-center.org)  
(includes County Online Resource Database  
– CORD)  
Crisis Hotline: 1-800-273-TALK

Community Violence Solutions  
and Rape Crisis Center  
[www.cvsolutions.org](http://www.cvsolutions.org)  
Crisis Hotline:  
1-800-670-7273  
Supervised Visitation:  
1-510-237-0113  
Stepping Stones Counseling Center  
1-510-237-0113

### Websites and Taskforces

The ACE Study  
[www.acestudy.org](http://www.acestudy.org)  
[www.cdc.gov/NCCDPHP/ACE/](http://www.cdc.gov/NCCDPHP/ACE/)

Asian and Pacific Islander Institute on  
Domestic Violence  
[www.apiahf.org/apidvinstitute](http://www.apiahf.org/apidvinstitute)

California State Attorney General's Safe  
from the Start Initiative:  
[www.safefromthestart.org](http://www.safefromthestart.org)

The Child Trauma Academy:  
[www.ChildTrauma.org](http://www.ChildTrauma.org)

Child Abuse, Training & Technical  
Assistance Center  
[www.CATTACenter.org](http://www.CATTACenter.org)

Family Violence Prevention Fund  
[www.endabuse.org](http://www.endabuse.org)

The Faith Trust Institute  
[www.faithtrustinstitute.org](http://www.faithtrustinstitute.org)

The Greenbook Initiative  
<http://www.thegreenbook.info/>

The Institute on Domestic Violence in the  
African American Community (IDVAAC)  
[www.dvinstitute.org](http://www.dvinstitute.org)

**The National Center for Children Exposed to Violence** (Yale University)

[www.nccev.org](http://www.nccev.org)

**National Coalition Against Domestic Violence** (NCADV)

[www.ncadv.org](http://www.ncadv.org)

**The National Latina Alliance**

[www.dvalianza.org](http://www.dvalianza.org)

**Shalom Taskforce**

**Orthodox Jewish**

[info@shalomtaskforce.com](mailto:info@shalomtaskforce.com)

1-888-883-2323

**National Online Resource Center on Violence Against Women (VAWNET)**

[www.vawnet.org](http://www.vawnet.org)

**Peace and Safety in the Christian Home (PASCH) Evangelical Christian**

[www.peaceandsafety.com](http://www.peaceandsafety.com)

**The Pennsylvania Coalition Against**

**Domestic Violence** [www.pcadv.org](http://www.pcadv.org)

**STAND Against Domestic Violence**

**Faith Community Taskforce to End**

**Domestic Violence**

[www.standagainstdv.org](http://www.standagainstdv.org)

[faith@standagainstdv.org](mailto:faith@standagainstdv.org)

## Curricula

**The Public Health Toolkit.** (2003); Developed by Linda Chamberlain PHD MPH for the Family Violence Prevention Fund, San Francisco, CA; 415-252-8900; [www.endabuse.org](http://www.endabuse.org)—go to “health” and select “Making the Connection”

The toolkit includes a comprehensive PowerPoint curriculum on CD-ROM, “*Making the Connection: Domestic Violence and Public Health*,” organized by different

areas of public health ranging from child and adolescent health to injury prevention; provides the epidemiology, the implication, relevant research, and promising strategies for each area of public health.

(from Linda Chamberlain, PhD MPH, [www.howlinghuskyhomstead.com](http://www.howlinghuskyhomstead.com))

## Books & Articles

*A Safe Place to Live: A Story for Children Who Have Experienced Domestic Violence* by Michelle A. Harrison (2002). Published by Kidsrights, Indianapolis, IN, 800-648-5478

*Child Custody and Domestic Violence: A Call for Safety and Accountability*, by Peter G. Jaffe, Nancy K.D. Lemon and Samantha E. Poisson (2003). Published by Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA

*Children and Interparental Violence* by B. B. Robbie Rosman, Honore M. Hughes, and Mindy S. Rosenberg (2000). Published by Guildford Press, NY, NY

*Children as witnesses to marital violence: A risk factor for lifelong problems among a nationally representative sample of American men and women* Straus, M.A. (1992), In D.F. Schwartz (ed.), *Children and violence: Report of the twenty-third roundtable on critical approaches to common pediatric problems* (pp.98-109). Columbus, OH: Ross Laboratories.

*Children of Battered Women* by Peter G. Jaffe, David A. Wolfe and Susan Kaye Wilson (2000; third printing). Published by Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA

*Depression, Substance Abuse and Domestic Violence: Little is Known about Co-Occurrence and Combined Effects on Low-Income Families* by Sharmilla Lawrence, Michelle Chair, Marie Clare Lennon (2004). National Center for Children in Poverty, Columbia University, Mailman School of Public Health, [http://www.nccp.org/publications/pub\\_546.html](http://www.nccp.org/publications/pub_546.html)

*Domestic Violence in the Lives of Children: The Future of Research, Intervention and Social Policy* edited by Sandra Graham-Bermann and Jeffrey Edleson (2001). Published by the American Psychological Association, Washington, DC

*The Effects of Intimate Partner Violence on Children* Edited by Robert Geffner, Robyn Spurling Igelman and Jennifer Zellner (2003), Haworth Maltreatment and Trauma Press

*Effective Intervention in Domestic Violence and Child Maltreatment Cases: Guidelines for Policy and Practice* by Susan Schechter and Jeffrey L. Edleson (1999). Published by the National Online Resource Center on Violence Against Women, [www.vaw.umn.edu](http://www.vaw.umn.edu)

*Emerging Responses to Children Exposed to Domestic Violence* by Jeffrey L. Edleson in consultation with Barbara A. Nissley (2006). Published by the National Online Resource Center on Violence Against Women, [www.vaw.umn.edu](http://www.vaw.umn.edu)

*God Is Not Abusive: Three Faiths Address Domestic Violence, Judaism, Christianity, Islam* Published by STAND Against Domestic Violence, Faith Community Taskforce to End Domestic Violence (2006), [faith@standagainstdv.org](mailto:faith@standagainstdv.org), [www.standagainstdv.org](http://www.standagainstdv.org)

*Groupwork with Children of Battered Women: A Practitioner's Manual* by Einat Peled and Diane Davis (1995). Published by Sage Publications

*Home Visitors' Guidebook, Domestic and Other Family Violence* Edited by Kathleen Chamberlin, RN, MS, Sheila Anderson, MA, and Dawn Marie Wadle, MD. Published by the Community College Foundation ([http://www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/cdic/epic/fdv/documents/Home\\_Visitor\\_Guidebook\\_Family\\_Violence.pdf](http://www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/cdic/epic/fdv/documents/Home_Visitor_Guidebook_Family_Violence.pdf))

*In Brief: Assessment for Lifetime Exposure to Violence as a Pathway to Prevention* by Linda Chamberlain (2006). Published by VAWnet, a project of the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, <http://www.vawnet.org/>

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*Learning to Listen, Learning to Help: Understanding Woman Abuse and its Effects on Children* by Linda L. Baker and Alison J. Cunningham (2005). Published by the Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System, Canada, [www.lfcc.on.ca](http://www.lfcc.on.ca)

*Little Eyes, Little Ears: How Violence Against a Mother Shapes Children as They Grow* by Allison Cunningham and Linda Baker (2007). Published by the National Clearinghouse on Family Violence, Canada, [http://www.lfcc.on.ca/little\\_eyes\\_little\\_ears.html](http://www.lfcc.on.ca/little_eyes_little_ears.html)

*The NCADI Reporter, (2005)., Domestic Violence Awareness Month*, published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA), [www.NCADI.Samhsa.gov](http://www.NCADI.Samhsa.gov)

*Parenting by Men Who Batter—New Directions for Assessment and Intervention*. Edited by Jeffrey L. Edleson and Oliver J. Williams (2006). Published by Oxford University Press, New York, NY

*Substance Abuse and Women Abuse by Male Partners* by Larry Bennett (1997). View full pdf at [www.vawnet.org](http://www.vawnet.org); [http://new.vawnet.org/Assoc\\_Files\\_VAWnet/AR\\_substance.pdf](http://new.vawnet.org/Assoc_Files_VAWnet/AR_substance.pdf)

*Substance Abuse Treatment System: Model Domestic Violence Policy for Counties*, published by the New York State Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence, [www.opdv.state.ny.us/coordination/model\\_policy/alcohol.html](http://www.opdv.state.ny.us/coordination/model_policy/alcohol.html)

*Violence in Homes and Communities: Prevention, Intervention and Treatment* edited by Thomas P. Gullotta and Sandra J. McElhaney (1999). Published by Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA

*When Children Witness Domestic Violence: Expert Opinion*, Issue Paper, Published by the National Coalition for Child Protection Reform (NCCP), [www.nccpr.org/index\\_files/page\\_0007.html](http://www.nccpr.org/index_files/page_0007.html)

*50 Strategies to Prevent Violent Domestic Crimes* (2003). Published by the National Crime Prevention Council, [www.ncpc.org/](http://www.ncpc.org/)