



# ST. DAMIAN'S R.C SCIENCE COLLEGE

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## Parenting a teenager who has Experienced Domestic Abuse

# 1 WHAT IS DOMESTIC ABUSE?

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Domestic abuse is any type of controlling, bullying, threatening or violent behavior between people in a relationship. But it isn't just physical violence – domestic abuse includes emotional, physical, sexual, financial or psychological abuse.

It can happen in any relationship, and even after the relationship has ended. Both men and women can be abused or abusers.

Domestic abuse can seriously harm children and young people. Witnessing domestic abuse is child abuse and teenagers can suffer domestic abuse in their relationships.

## 2 TEENAGERS WITNESSING DOMESTIC ABUSE

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Witnessing domestic abuse is really distressing and scary for a child, and causes serious harm. Teenagers living in a home where domestic abuse is happening are at risk of other types of abuse too. Teenagers can experience domestic abuse or violence in lots of different ways. They might:

- See the abuse
- Hear the abuse from another room
- See a parent's injuries or distress afterwards
- Be hurt by being nearby or trying to stop the abuse

Teenagers who witness domestic abuse may:

- Become aggressive
- Display anti-social behavior
- Suffer from depression or anxiety

- Not do as well at school – due to difficulties at home or disruption of moving to and from houses or refuges

**Parents or carers may underestimate the effects of the abuse of their children because they don't see what's happening.**

**Children witnessing domestic abuse is recognized as 'significant harm' in law.**

**The effects can last into adulthood. But, once they're in a safer and more stable environment, most children are able to move on from the effects of witnessing domestic abuse.**

### **3 PARENTING A TEENAGER WHO HAS EXPERIENCED DOMESTIC ABUSE**

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The teenage years for most parents and teenagers are a time of difficulty. This can be made particularly difficult if there is domestic abuse and/or violence.

During teenage years, your child is learning who they are, and are comfortable exploring this. They are beginning to realise that they are young adults. They may begin to question authority (even the most adjusted of teenagers will begin to question authority!).

Teenagers are prone to self-doubt. Peer relationships are very important and overtake (although do not replace) the relationships with parents.

They begin to overcome self-consciousness as they progress through their teenage years and it is important for them to have people that they feel they relate to.

They begin to experiment with roles and find the one most suitable for them.

**Parenting teenagers can be made more difficult if there is domestic violence/abuse in the home.**

- They may be trying to go through the natural processes of separation from the parents **BUT** this will be more difficult for them because they may feel that you need them and rely on them to help you with the abuse.
- This can cause resentment and can restrict their ability to explore who they are.
- They may feel socially isolated due to the problems at home.
- Their emotional development can be affected in many ways.
- They may begin to explore a relationship with a peer which could reflect the relationships that they have experience at home.
- They may also be beginning to build sustainable friendships which could also suffer because of the domestic abuse and/or violence.

Teenagers need to have a sense of...

INTEGRITY, TRUST, HAPPINESS, SECURITY and SELF-CONFIDENCE.

**These can all suffer as a result of domestic abuse or violence!**

## 4 HOW DO I BEGIN TO OVERCOME THE EFFECTS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE/VIOLENCE WITH MY TEENAGER?

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Communicate with your teenager!

Listen to them!

You may not like what they have to say but they need to tell you how they are feeling about the abuse and/or violence.

Try to be non-threatening.

Your teenager, despite all of their efforts to be/appear independent, needs you.

If they have experienced domestic abuse they may display some of the following:

- They may be angry and confused
- They may resent you for putting up with the abuse and/or not standing up for yourself
- They have unrealistic expectations and beliefs about intimate relationships
- They may be aggressive to others
- They may harm themselves or others
- They may suffer poor self-esteem
- They may be particularly shy
- They may try to protect you from your abuser
- They may rebel against authority figures
- They may have poor coping skills
- They may experience depression, stress or anxiety

## 5 HOW CAN I HELP MY TEENAGER?

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**Talk to them BUT don't pressure them.**

**Make time for them to come to you.**

**Take time away from the home so that they can relax with you.**

**Come up with safe and simple ground rules for both of you.**

**Develop a safety plan.**

**Name and praise positive behaviour.**

## 6 FURTHER INFORMATION

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If you feel that you are not coping with your teenager or that their behavior is worsening or dangerous, it is important to get help and support as soon as possible.

You can speak with your child's teacher, your GP or seek counselling for your teenager and you if appropriate.

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Many parents worry that the impact of the abuse and/or violence will remain with their child throughout their lives and that their children will be negatively influenced by the abuse/violence.

This is not the case. In many situations, supporting your child with the abuse and communicating with them about the abuse will help to get rid of any of the negative effects the experience of domestic abuse and/or violence has caused.

There is a lot that you can do to help!

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Please note that the term 'experiencing domestic abuse' means seeing, hearing, knowing about or being abused.

## 7 SOURCES OF HELP FOR YOUR TEENAGER

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Childline

0800 1111

[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

Childline is a private and confidential service for young people up to the age of 19 providing phone and website support.

The Hideout

[www.hideout.org.uk](http://www.hideout.org.uk)

A website for children and young people with interactive resources to help them understand domestic abuse and where to get help from.

Respect Not Fear

[www.respectnotfear.co.uk](http://www.respectnotfear.co.uk)

A website for young people about relationships with information support and interactive games.

Leap Confronting Conflict

[www.leapconfrontingconflict.org.uk](http://www.leapconfrontingconflict.org.uk)

Leap works nationally with young people and adults, helping them to understand and manage the everyday conflict in their lives, and supporting them to become role models and leaders of positive change.

Bridges – building bridges to a brighter future

New Charter Tameside

0161 331 2552

24 hour – 0800 328 0967