

Even when we think that children are not aware of violence or tension, they usually see and hear more than we expect. Children can have a variety of reactions to violence, and their feelings often come out in actions rather than words.

Age	Symptoms
INFANTS Birth to 12	Changes in sleeping and eating patterns, clinginess and difficulty separating from adults, inconsolable crying or flat affect, fear of new things, startle easily, lack of curiosity
TODDLERS 12-36 months	Delay in verbal development, poor motor abilities, impaired cognitive abilities, general fearfulness, anxiety, stomachaches, nightmares, lack of confidence to begin new tasks
PRE-SCHOOL 3 to 5 years	Atypical aggressive behaviors or withdrawal from peers, nightmares, re-experiencing event, loss of appetite, trouble concentrating, bedwetting, anger outburst, low self-esteem
SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN 6 to 12 years	Low self-esteem, decreased empathy, negative affect, calling other children names, biting, hitting, or slapping peers during play interactions
TEENAGERS 13-18 years	Physical complaints (headaches, stomachaches), constant worry about possible danger or safety of loved ones, depression or withdrawal from others, suicidal thought and action, difficulty paying attention in class, bullying, aggression and outbursts of anger, school truancy, or runaway behavior. In some cases, may include high-risk behaviors such as criminal activity, substance abuse, dating violence, and teenage pregnancy.

- Talking about the violence can be a powerful way to help children heal. If your child wants to talk about the violence, let them.
- Help children understand that they are not responsible for the violence and it is not their job to stop the violence.
- Provide physical and emotional comfort to your child. Remind your child that they are loved and that they are important.
- Establish routines and structure for your child. Give your child clear expectations, such as, "It is against the rules to intentionally harm anyone."
- Discuss with your child how to treat their peers with respect and kindness. Model positive social interactions for them.
- Help your child label their emotions by using words such as "mad," "sad," "angry," or "happy." Help your child understand the perspective of others and that their actions can hurt others.
- If your child is acting out, approach them with a calm tone. When a child is unsure if their environment is safe, they may appear "out of control." Help them understand they are safe.
- Allow your child to love the person who has been violent, but help them understand violence is wrong and hurtful.
- **Remember, you are the most important person in your child's life, and it is important to take care of yourself as well as your child.**

To talk with someone about the effects of violence on our children, or to locate services, please contact the Fairfax County 24-hour Domestic & Sexual Violence Hotline at 703-360-7273.

Adapted from: <http://promising.futureswithoutviolence.org/files/2013/01/16-Trauma-Informed-Evidence-Based-Recommendations-For-Advocates2.pdf>

