



Adapted by Cat Gander from  
*Helping Children Thrive*

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# You & Your School-aged Child



Primary school children, aged 6 to 12, can understand right and wrong, cause and effect. At this age, doing well at school and having friends has a big impact on how children feel about themselves. They will make friends and plan social activities for themselves. They start to identify more with the same-sex parent and are now more aware of differences between males and females in our society.

## Normal behaviours for children aged 6–12 years old

Which things do you see in your child so far?

- Everything is a contest and some children want to have the best and be better than their friends at sports etc.
- Doing well in school is important and if they do not do well, they may blame themselves
- Being popular with friends is important
- Wants everything and everyone to be fair
- Able to think and talk about their emotions and how they feel
- Being able to understand how other people feel, not just them
- Consider the reasoning behind a behaviour
- Gains a sense of satisfaction from being able to help with jobs and tasks at home

## How to help school-aged children cope

- Tell and show them that you love them and will take care of them
- Help them believe the violence and separation were not their fault
- Take responsibility for the decision to leave (if you and your partner have separated)
- Let them know you are there to talk when they are ready, but do not force them to talk
- Let them know it is okay to talk about the father/partner
- Do not express your anger at the father/partner in front of them
- Do not say they are “like their dad/partner”
- Help them learn to meet their wants without intimidating or threatening others
- Limit (or eliminate) the amount of television and movies with violence and violent themes
- Spend some “fun time” together (homework and chores do not count)
- Find activities they can do with their friends (e.g. soccer)
- Reassure them that you are okay
- Don’t rely on them for emotional support: seek out friends, family or professionals for that
- Take care of yourself, make time just for you.



## Effects of violence at home

When school-aged children sees violence at home, they may...

- be concerned for their mother's safety and any consequences for the father or partner (e.g. arrest)
- understand that their mother remains upset even after the violent incident ends
- find reasons for violence that seem plausible (e.g. alcohol, job stress)
- blame themselves for the violence if they believe they could have prevented it (e.g. by cleaning up) or if they hear their names mentioned during the 'fight'
- recognize one person in a 'fight' as the aggressor and one as the victim
- question the intent behind the 'fight' as well as think about how the 'fight' turned out - the fairness of a 'fight' is very important
- they may feel that arrest or jail are not fair consequences for the father or partner
- notice any differences between what they saw happen and how others describe it later

## What your school-aged child may be feeling

### **Guilt:**

Guilt if he/she blames it on himself/herself for bad things such as the violence and divorce

## What your school-aged child may be feeling (continued)

### **Concern:**

Concern over seeing mum sad and upset

### **Confusion:**

Confusion about why one parent would hurt the other parent

### **Worry:**

Worry over what the future holds for the family

These feelings and beliefs are all normal reactions to the situation.

## What you may be feeling about your child

### **Resentful:**

If he/she wants things you cannot give them

### **Hurt:**

If he or she is disrespectful and withdraws from you

### **Concern:**

If you worry the violence has damaged him or her or caused bad behaviour

### **Guilt:**

If you regret that he or she does not have another responsible parent

### **Frustration:**

If he or she has seemingly "forgotten" about the violence or maltreatment