



PEGS

PARENTAL EDUCATION
GROWTH SUPPORT

Child To Parent Abuse

WHAT IS CHILD TO PARENT ABUSE?

Children displaying abusive and violent behaviours towards parents and family members is a serious issue and evidence suggest it is increasing. This abuse can be carried out by sons and daughters against mothers, fathers, grandparents, siblings and carers.

It is easy for parents or carer givers to feel guilty and ashamed when children are abusive and violent. However recent research shows that child to adult violence is common - about 20% of teenagers are violent to their parents and about 10% seriously so.

There are multiple reasons why this occurs, including peer groups, wider society, media, violent or an absent parent, mental health and/or traumatic and stressful situations. However, sometimes there is no clear reason for why these things happen.



You're Not Alone!



1 in 10 families will experience child to parent abuse



In 2018 there were 14,000 calls to the police about child violence and abuse



In a 2 year period, parentline received over 22,000 calls in relation to child to parent abuse



65% of adopted families will experience child to parent abuse



Child violence is not just against parents. Many children are also violent to their siblings.



Child violence exists across all sections of society irrespective of gender, race, culture, nationality, religion, sexuality, disability, age, class, or educational level.



Emotional

Physical

Financial

Types Of Violence

- hitting, punching, spitting, shoving
- damaging and throwing things,
- punching holes in walls or doors
- bullying or causing harm to siblings
- harmful to pets
- any actions or behaviour threatening a person's safety and well-being.

- verbal abuse, humiliations, screaming, yelling, swearing and 'put-downs'
- verbal intimidation
- whispering campaigns
- psychological and emotional intimidation
- playing mind games
- threatening to hurt or kill themselves or to run away to gain control over you
- threats on social media
- e-violence

- demanding money or things you cannot afford
- stealing money or possessions from you, your family or friends
- incurring debts that you are responsible for.

How Do I Know If It's Happening/ Whether I've Experienced It?

It is important to listen to your own feelings. You'll know if something isn't right. You may have experienced child violence if:

- you feel afraid of upsetting your child and try to change your behaviour to avoid it.
- you're walking on 'eggshells' and you try to predict what your child wants/ needs.
- your child harms his/ her siblings by pushing, hitting, punching, throwing things and causing damage to possessions.
- your child threatens to hurt you, themselves or others, if you do not meet his or her demands.
- your child attempts to humiliate or embarrass you, your family or friends.
- your child constantly puts you down and criticises you.
- your child threatens to run away, if you do not do what they want.
- your child blames you for their behaviour.



What You May Be Feeling

Sibling concern

- Other children can be affected by the child's violence. Many children who are violent to their parents are also violent to their siblings, meaning other children may be unsafe.
- You may not have the time or energy to give to the other siblings because the stress of the abusive child is too overwhelming.
- Your child may also use drugs or alcohol or engage in illegal activities. This may mean their siblings are unsafe or at risk of harm.

Despair and isolation - You may feel:

- Isolated and completely alone
- Unsupported and responsible for your situation.
- Like nothing or no one can help.
- Hopeless and helpless because the situation isn't/ can't be under control.
- Totally unsupported because of the lack of services or information available to help you.
- Despair at not having a harmonious family life.
- You cannot talk or think about anything else but your child.
- Your child's behaviour seems to be a replica/ remind you of your abusive partner's (current/ former) violence towards you.

Shame and humiliation - You may feel:

- A great sense of shame and feel like a failure.
- Confused about where you went wrong and begin to question your parenting abilities.
- That you are entirely responsible for your child's violent behaviour.
- You are a 'bad' parent and you're to blame.

Loss - You may feel:

- A huge sense of loss because the child you used to know, love and enjoy, seems to be driving a wedge in the relationship/ acting different and isn't the same.
- Grief if your child has had to leave home.
- The loss of people around you like family and friends who do not want or know how to assist you.
- Worried the young person will leave home and breakdown the relationship entirely.

Fear - You may feel:

- like you are living in fear, worried what will happen in the future when your son/ daughter is bigger and stronger than you.
- 'unsafe' in your own home.

Relationship Stress – You may feel:

- child violence often leads to arguments between adults in the home, as to how the behaviour should be dealt with. Different ideas between partners on what caused the violence and how it can be resolved is common. This can place enormous stress on family and partner relationships.
- frustrated when people give you solutions, as they do not know what you are going through.
- threatened by your child's other parent who may take your child's side (particularly if you are a sole parent).

Health issues

- You may be depressed or anxious and this can therefore impact on your health and well-being.
- You may experience insomnia, physical illness and fatigue.

Loss of trust

- You may feel unable to trust your child especially when you are not at home to supervise.
- You may be worried that your child has damaged or stolen property and be concerned about whether the other siblings are safe.
- You may find it difficult to leave the house at all.

Work issues

- You may find it difficult to concentrate at work as the issues and difficulties have extended into the workplace as well as home.
- You may find that time off work needs to be taken, so you can seek support.
- Financial pressures may increase if your child causes damage to property. You may experience the additional cost of counselling and legal fees.

Family Violence

Children who witness or experience domestic violence/ abuse to a parent may behave in a similar way to the abusive parent or family member. This can still happen if the child was a baby or young child when the violence occurred.

Social issues

Children may be influenced by the society and culture in which they live.

Some influences may include:

- societal exposure to violence.
- ideas about stereotyping and the role of women.
- pornography availability.

Parenting

Parents may be influenced by their culture or their surroundings and society they live in. Parenting practices that can sometimes result in child violence include:

- feeling you should sacrifice your own happiness and well-being to make your child happy
- feeling guilty for the break-up of the family
- parenting that gives a child too much freedom or parenting that is authoritarian
- not being physically or emotionally available to your child.
- conflict in parenting styles so that the child can manipulate his or her parents
- parents' own psychological makeup e.g. fear of conflict which prevents parents taking action.

Child's Issues

Children may be violent because they:

- have an over-developed sense of entitlement
- have a lack of respect for women
- have experienced bullying in school (getting bullied or being the bully)
- have previously experienced trauma such as war or family violence
- are influenced by the people around them (friends, peers)
- misuse alcohol or drugs
- have mental health issues
- have been abused in the past.

Things To Remember About Violent Behaviour

- It won't go away! There are occasions where it stops as the child grows up, but violent behaviour generally worsens over time.
- There are no simple answers when it comes to violent behaviour.
- You don't have to know why things are happening to change the situation. Even a small change may feel like an improvement.
- A change in the child's behaviour will not occur if they're on their own. With support from others, you can help to facilitate the change.
- All types of violence are inappropriate, with physical violence and property damage being a criminal offence.
- Violence may only occur in cycles or isolated incidents. Be aware that children may only apologise after the violence to give you a false sense of hope that things are improving. They usually need more help to change.
- The child is responsible for the violent behaviour. The violence is never an acceptable or healthy way for the child to overcome the difficulties in their life.

- You may not want to report violent behaviour to the police because you are concerned for your child's future and opportunities. You may feel you won't be believed, that you'll be blamed or that you'll lose the support of family and friends if you bring the child to the attention of the Police or other services.
- Remember that it is better for you, your child and the rest of your family if the violence stops. If nothing else works, the help of the police may be the only way to stop the violence from continuing.
- The child may blame you for not meeting their demands and hold you responsible, but remember the person being violent is always responsible for their behaviour.
- You may have tried to talk to your child about their behaviour. Give yourself credit for all the things you have tried, even if nothing has worked.
- We all experience stress and anger, from time to time. However, the child may use these feelings to excuse violent behaviour. It is important to separate their feelings from their behaviour. Feelings are acceptable; violence is not!

What Can You Do If Your Child's Being Violent?

- Talk about what's happening with someone you trust, such as a friend, family member or counsellor.
- Use the contact list at the back of this booklet to get in contact with helpful services.
- If you are in fear for your own or another's safety, call the police. Violence, threats of violence and assault are all crimes that can be reported.
- You may feel that calling the police is totally unacceptable. No parent likes to consider this possibility, but explaining this clearly to the child, may indicate you will not tolerate the violence.
- Develop a safety plan for you and your family should you need it.

Safety Plan...

In the event of a crisis, when you may have to leave home in a hurry, it can be useful to have a safety plan in place. Here are a few suggestions for preparing a safety plan.

- Think about where you could go and who could support you if an emergency arose.
- Always carry a list of emergency numbers, e.g. police, family members, support services.
- Ensure you have access to a phone.
- Try to keep some money aside so that you can use a taxi, train or bus, if needed.
- Keep a spare set of house and car keys in a safe place.
- Ensure other children can use a phone and know emergency numbers.
- Keep notes or a diary with dates and brief details about the violence. These may be needed in the future, if you take protective or legal action.
- It is important to inform yourself about the full range of options available to you, even if you choose not to take legal action.
- Call the services listed at the end of this booklet for more information and to discuss your options.

Useful strategies

When you are feeling strong, it's best to start making some decisions. Firstly, think about what you expect from your child:

Write down what behaviour is reasonable and unreasonable, make sure this is clear in your head. For example - You may decide that it is reasonable for your child to wash the dishes two nights a week. You may decide that it is unreasonable for your child to swear at you when s/he wants something.

Always stay firm! Your child may bully you into negotiating a way around what you want them to do. Don't feel pressured into changing your mind because they want you to.

Explain to your child that you love them but also explain that you will not tolerate being abused.

Don't start with too many expectations. Two or three related to stopping their violence and behaving responsibly is a good start.

Use 'I' statements - 'I will be very upset if you are not home when you agreed you would be'.

Clearly stating expectations to your child will allow a clearer image of what needs to be done for both you and the child. - "I need you to speak respectfully to me if you want me to drive you to your friends. If you swear at me, I will not be taking you" or "I will not tolerate you breaking possessions. In the future your pocket money will be used to replace broken things".

Secondly, think about what consequences you can put in place to support your child in meeting your expectations.

- Consequences must be relevant and important to your child.
- Set up a plan which explains how and when you can use these consequences.
- Explain to your child that if they do not meet your expectations you will put the stated consequences into action.

Examples Of Consequences

Withdrawal of privileges such as internet access, television, iPod or mobile phone use for a certain number of days.



'Grounding' in general or stopping your child doing something they want to do like staying the night at a friend's house.



Cutting back or stopping pocket money or mobile phone use.



Undertaking a compulsory activity such as extra household chores.



Things To Remember and Looking At Your Behaviour

Behaviour

It is important to think about your own behaviour. If your behaviour is inappropriate you cannot expect your child to change theirs. For example it is difficult to tell a child not to smoke if the parent does. Likewise, if you swear at your child or use violence against them its highly likely that they will feel as though it's okay to behave that way, despite what you may be saying to them.

- It may take some time for a new approach to actually work but don't worry, taking new approaches are always difficult to begin with. For a period of time your child may rebel against any new approach, so you may see things worsen before they improve.
- If the child does not believe you will follow through then your words will lose it's impact, so try and follow through with the consequence you put in place, otherwise your child will not take you seriously.
- Choose your battle. Ignore those issues you can live with and focus on the more difficult ones, overtime you can always come back to the smaller problems.

Remember

Changing Your Behaviour

- No matter how angry, disappointed or frustrated you are, always treat your child with respect.
- Try to remain verbally and physically affectionate towards them and everyone else.
- Recognise when you are stressed. Think about how stress affects how you parent and communicate with your child. How could any issues be solved?
- Think about how you respond to your child's behaviour – does it make them angrier or calm them down?
- Make sure you know your own triggers as well as theirs. What does your child do to make you angry?
- It can be hard to do, but try and be calm and less angry
- Don't think about 'winners' and 'losers' – think about building harmonious and stronger family relationships.

Moving Forward

Often the child will blame you or others for their behaviour and refuse to take responsibility for their actions. They see it as 'your' problem and usually refuse counselling or other help. You will need to ensure you have clear and consistent rules to put in place for your child in order for them to feel safe and secure. By holding the child accountable for their actions, you are teaching them how to behave and respond appropriately. By caring for yourself and seeking help you can regain your confidence, work on your own behaviour and responses and effect changes in your child's behaviour. It may be useful to participate in a group programme or individual, couple or family counselling to explore ways to keep you and your family safe, look after yourself and stop the violence. The sooner you take action the sooner things will improve.

Useful Services

**Shropshire
Domestic Abuse
Service**
0300 3031191

**Parent Line
Young Minds**
0808 802 5544

Family Lives
0808 800 2222

**Pathway
Project**
01543 676800



07878 568 063



PEGS Child To Parent
Abuse Support



hello@pegssupport.com



www.pegssupport.com

Police
999 - emergency
101 - other

**National
Domestic Abuse
Helpline**
0808 2000 247

**Shropshire,
Telford &
Wrekin access
service**
0300 124 0365

**Shropshire
psychological
therapies**
0300 123 6020