

Practice considerations	Conversation ideas
<p><b>Children are likely to respond to practitioners who are:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• warm, open and approachable</li> <li>• interested in them and enjoy their company</li> <li>• able to notice their emotions</li> <li>• capable of hearing their story and pain</li> <li>• acknowledge it may be hard or scary for them</li> <li>• able to provide a safe space for them to share their story</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘You looked upset when I talked about your dad. Tell me about that.’</li> <li>• ‘I talk to lots of kids about their worries. It can be scary telling someone like me about your worries but I might also be able to help.’</li> <li>• ‘Thank you for telling me that dad pulls mums hair. I want you to know that I believe you.’</li> <li>• ‘Thank you for speaking with me. I really like spending time with you.’</li> <li>• ‘Other kids have told me ... [they feel, have seen or life is like] Is it like that for you, or is it different?’</li> </ul>
<p><b>Respond to fear and blame</b></p> <p>Always tell the child that the violence is not their fault. Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• that he may have used strategies to undermine them such as ridicule</li> <li>• that they may fear talking about the violence because of the consequences, like their dad going to jail or them being removed from their mum</li> <li>• the impact on the child</li> <li>• when the man who uses violence is gone</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘It is not your fault that mum gets hurt. It is never your fault, even if [man] tells you it is.’</li> <li>• ‘It is the job of adults to keep kids safe. There are adults who will work to keep you and your family safe.’</li> <li>• ‘It’s okay to love and want to spend time with dad. It’s okay to be mad at him. Lots of kids who I speak to also feel scared.’</li> <li>• ‘If you feel worried later — after I have left — you can contact me. Who else can you talk to?’</li> <li>• ‘If the police come to see [man], this is not your fault.’</li> </ul>
<p><b>Understand their broad experiences</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask about everyone in the family, noticing their emotional reactions.</li> <li>• Talk with them about how places, people and things make them feel — these feelings and physical sensations are valuable insights into a child’s experience of safety or harm.</li> <li>• Help them share their ideas about safety.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Tell me about who lives in your house. Tell me more about [man].’</li> <li>• ‘Tell me about your house. What happens in your house? How do you feel about your house? How do you feel about granny’s house?’</li> <li>• ‘When you feel scared, what do you do? How do you do that? What happens when you do that?’</li> <li>• ‘When you feel happy, what are you doing? Who is there?’</li> </ul>
<p><b>Use their language</b></p> <p>Most children don’t relate to the term domestic violence but may talk about hitting and hurting. Ask questions that will help you understand dynamics of power and control.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Who’s the boss in your house?’</li> <li>• ‘Dad smashes shit up. Tell me about dad smashing shit.’</li> <li>• ‘I’m interested in Brian’s angry looks. Tell me about that.’</li> </ul>

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<p><b>Name the violence and ask about how they cope</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draw out beliefs about living with violence.</li> <li>• Seek to understand the roles of each child in the family (imposed or assumed).</li> <li>• Consider any other stressors experienced by the family.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Where are you when Dad calls mum a slut?'</li> <li>• 'What did you do?'</li> <li>• 'What happens when you ... [action]'</li> <li>• 'Dad was punching the wall. What did you do?'</li> <li>• 'You hid in your bedroom. That sounds like a pretty smart idea. Then what did you do?'</li> <li>• 'What do you think about Brian hurting mum?'</li> <li>• 'You saw mum crying. What did you do? What does [sister] do?'</li> <li>• 'What happens when you get home from school?' 'What is happening in the house when you are watching TV?'</li> </ul>