

HEALING AND RECOVERY IN CHILDREN EXPOSED TO MEN WHO BATTER

Lundy Bancroft

RESILIENCE IN CHILDREN

- Strength of mother-child relationship
- Mother's protectiveness
- Strength of sibling relationships
- Other healthy relatives
- Strength of peer relationships

RESILIENCE IN CHILDREN

- Positive school experience, school relationships (esp. teachers)
- Positive activities (sports, music, clubs, arts, dance, etc.)
- Expressiveness
- Not feeling guilty/not blaming Mom
- Safe feeling places to go

KEY CONCEPTS

- Children heal through:
 - Repairing their connection to mom and siblings
 - Experiencing increased safety
 - Loving, appropriate relationships with adults

KEY CONCEPTS

- Children heal through:
 - Receiving appropriate reactions to their disclosures
 - Expressing and processing their distress
 - Learning healthy values

How Children Heal

- Opportunities to describe what they have experienced to a caring listener
- Expressing their emotional distress in words, art work, and play
- Releasing their emotional distress through crying, tantrums, and laughter

How Children Heal

- Opportunities to ask questions, clarify misconceptions
- Hearing that the abuse is not their fault, being relieved of their guilt
- Learning constructive actions they can take, being relieved of their powerlessness
- Understand that Mom is not at fault

Context for Children's Recovery

- Not feel responsible to take care of adults
- Constructive, appropriate information about the abuse
- Access to community resources and activities
- Strong social relationships, including siblings

Context for Children's Recovery

- Psycho-educational groups or specialized therapy
- Freedom from inappropriate psychiatric medication
- If safe, have limited contact with the father

How Children Are Empowered

- Receiving values education / reeducation
- Developing critical thinking skills
 - ✓ About abuse
 - ✓ About adult conduct in general
 - ✓ About manipulation
 - ✓ About cultural and media messages
 - ✓ About sexism and other forms of oppression

Contributing to Children's Recovery

- Build a working alliance with Mom, treating her with respect and equality
- Consider her the expert on her own abusive partner, her children, and her situation
- Assess and validate the mother's strengths
 - ✓ Her history of efforts to seek help
 - ✓ Her history of efforts to protect her children
 - ✓ Her access to community resources and her ability to draw upon them

Contributing to Children's Recovery

- Keep mothers and children together whenever possible
- Support the custody rights of battered mothers
- Perform proper custody assessment

CONTRIBUTING TO CHILDREN'S RECOVERY

- Giving children support for their loving and resentful feelings toward both parents
- Repairing damaged mother-child relationships
- Repairing damaged sibling relationships

How Children Are Empowered

- Having their strengths recognized and encouraged
- Participating in safety planning (see guide at LundyBancroft.com)

Contributing to Children's Recovery

- Work with batterers on their parenting, but only with respect to:
 - ✓ Effects on children of exposure to battering
 - ✓ Child abuse prevention
 - ✓ Proper co-parenting
 - Respecting the children's mother
 - Respecting her maternal authority
 - Sharing decision-making

Contributing to Children's Recovery

- Creating written policies and protocols on responding to children of battered women
- Effective child abuse reporting
- Creating community task forces and other collaborations to address the needs of abused mothers and their children

Contributing to Children's Recovery

- Change community values about the abuse of women
- Promote values of respect and equality for all people