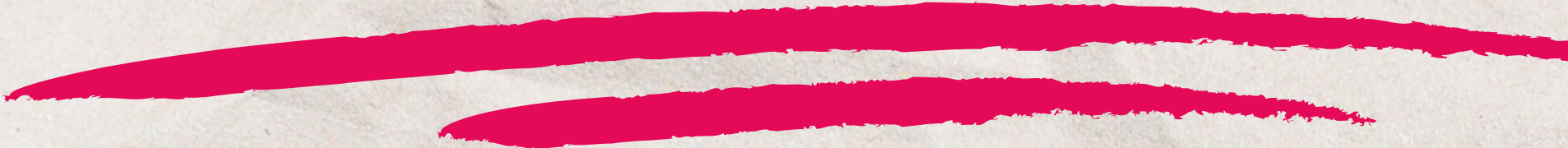


OUR STORY



Domestic Homicide

Guidance for professionals and carers supporting children and young people who have lost a parent or family member due to domestic homicide

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Introduction

This guidance has been produced as an aid to be used by adults when talking with children and young people who have lost a parent or family member due to domestic homicide.

Each section provides the adult with information on specific topics and examples that may help provide the child or young person with an understanding of domestic abuse, domestic homicide, how they may be feeling and the emotions they may be experiencing. The adult can use age appropriate words to explain each section.

The guidance also includes useful contacts and links to services that can provide advice and support for children, young people and adults. See page 12.

The information about feelings and bereavement has been adapted from information from Cruse Bereavement support
www.cruse.org.uk

Commissioned by the Safer Sandwell Partnership, written by Eleanor Stobart in conjunction with Advocacy After Fatal Domestic Abuse (AAFDA)



Healthy and unhealthy relationships

What is a healthy relationship?

A healthy relationship is where a child or adult feels respected and valued for who they are, they can openly share their thoughts and feelings in the relationship and they feel safe. In a healthy relationship there is:



GOOD COMMUNICATION You can talk about the things you want to

MUTUAL RESPECT You care about each other's thoughts and feelings



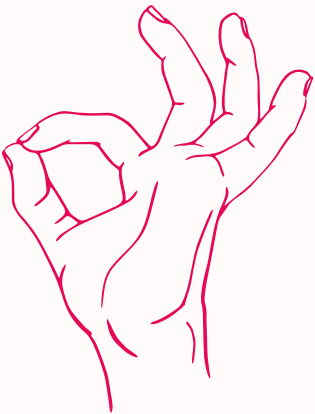
TRUST You can rely on and believe in each other; you don't hide things

HONESTY You don't lie to each other



EQUALITY Everybody's opinions and needs are equally important

BEING YOURSELF You can live your life how you want to. **You're great as you are!**



In a healthy relationship, a person is free to make choices about their own behaviour and is not being told by someone else what they should do and who they can talk to. For example, you can wear what you like, listen to the music you like and spend time with people who you choose. Rather than being told by someone else what you should do and who you can talk to.

What might make a relationship unhealthy?

An unhealthy or abusive relationship is one where a child or adult is not being treated with respect. They may be forced into doing things they aren't comfortable with, be made to behave in a certain way, or be made to feel they aren't good enough. This is often called domestic abuse.

Domestic Abuse

What is a domestic abuse?

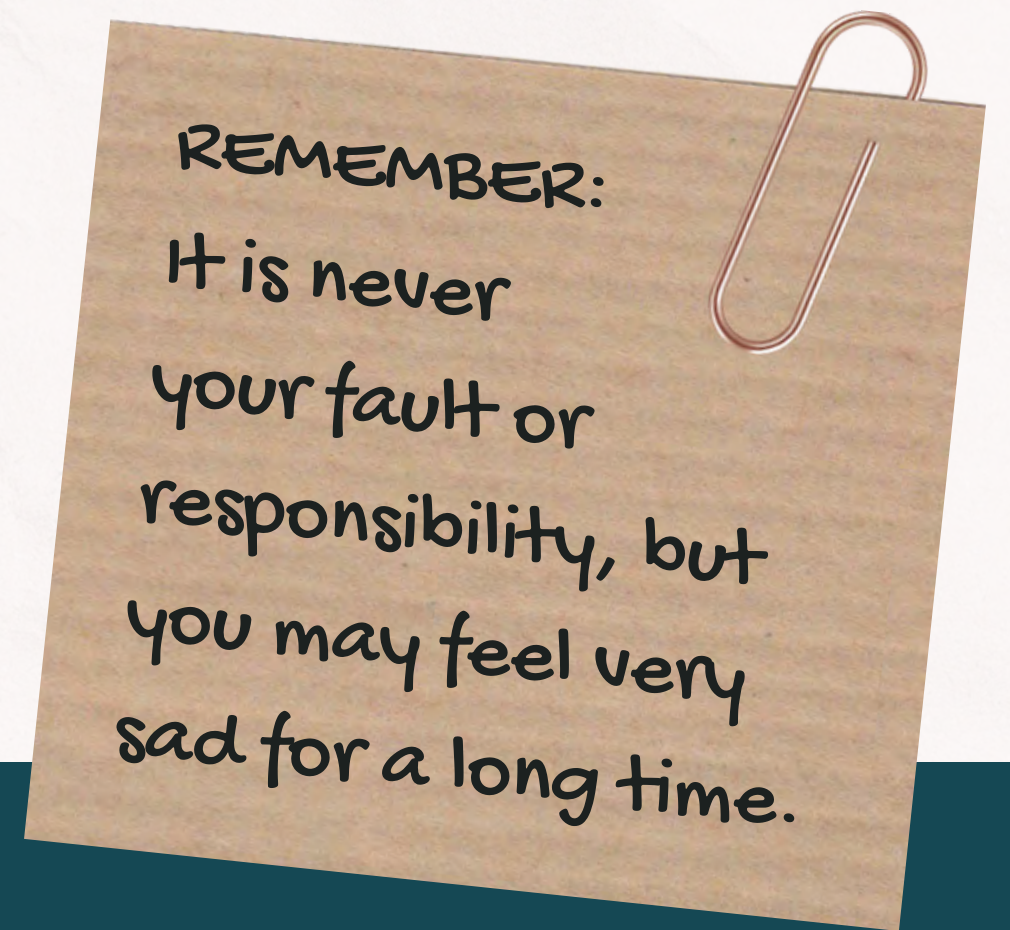
Domestic abuse can happen in an unhealthy relationship.

There are different types of abuse. For example, it can be physical and violent and may include hitting, punching, kicking, slapping or strangling.

People in an unhealthy relationship may say nasty things to each other. For example they can say the other person is useless, ugly or stupid, call them nasty names or use other words to make them feel bad about themselves.

Domestic abuse can happen over the phone or through social media. It can also carry on when a relationship has ended.

It can be very confusing, scary and overwhelming living in a household where there is domestic abuse, especially when you love the people involved and they love you.

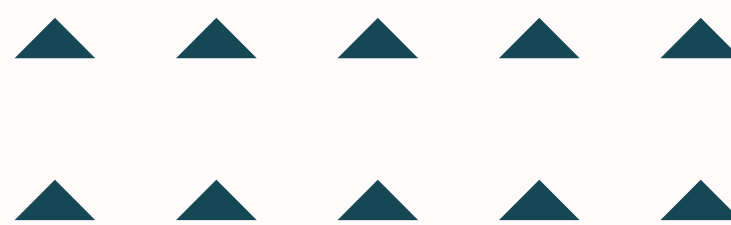


People may not always realise when they are in an unhealthy or abusive relationship, so it is important that we are all able to recognise the signs.

A person may:

- Be separated or kept away from friends and family
- Be prevented from working or going to school/college/university
- Have their money taken away or controlled
- Have access to food, drinks and day-to-day items restricted
- Have their time or social media accounts controlled, heavily monitored or be constantly checked
- Be told what to wear or criticised on their appearance
- Feel they have to do things they are not comfortable with
- Be put down or criticised - for example by the way they look, the colour of their skin or what they say
- Experience threats of violence if they don't behave a certain way
- Experience threats to loved ones or pets
- Be threatened with damage to their personal property

Red Flags



When a relationship is unhealthy, we notice there are things that may make the other person start the violence or the nasty words and these are often called 'red flags'.

This may be when the other person takes drugs, drinks alcohol or if the person is jealous and wants to know where you are all the time as detailed below.

DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

There is a strong link between using drugs and alcohol and domestic abuse.

When someone has taken drugs or alcohol, they are more likely to lose control of their actions. Being under the influence of any substance greatly increases the chances of abusive behaviour, but it can never be an excuse for abusive behaviour.

JEALOUSY

Sometimes a partner can be jealous and possessive.

At first it might appear that they are very loving – for example they may text you all the time, wanting to know what you are doing.

Over time, this may turn into controlling behaviour which can lead to isolation, intimidation and violence.

Domestic Homicide



What is a domestic homicide?

Domestic homicide is when one person kills another person within their household or family.

Every domestic homicide is different because every family is different. It is the closeness of these relationships and the fact that they often happen after many years of abuse that makes domestic homicide an upsetting and confusing experience.

What are domestic homicide reviews?

When someone is killed by a family member, the local council carries out a review. This is known as a domestic homicide review.

Domestic homicide reviews are an important way to help professionals (for example, social workers, police officers, teachers and doctors) improve their responses to people experiencing domestic abuse.

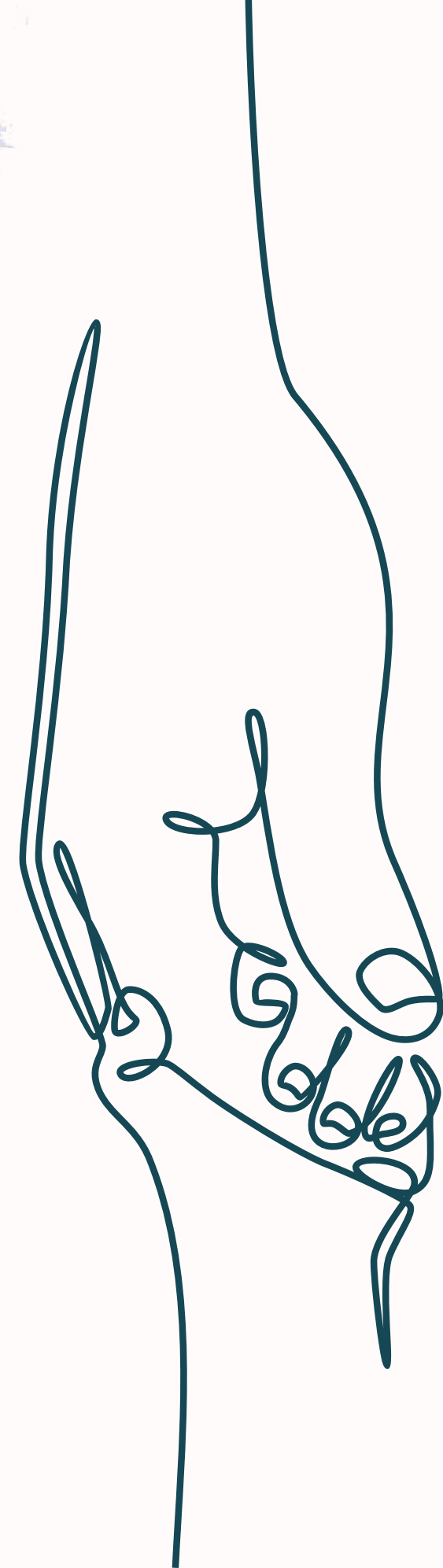
The main purpose of a domestic homicide review is to understand what happened and what could have been done differently. This is to improve responses to families in the future and help to prevent what happened to your family happening to others.

Feelings you might have had since the death of a parent or family member

The death of a parent or family member can make a child or young person feel a range of emotions.



If you are experiencing any of these feelings, it is important to discuss how you feel and your worries with someone. At the end of this booklet there is a list of some organisations that you can contact for help.



You may feel that things you used to enjoy don't seem to matter anymore.

You may feel horror and anger which make the feelings of intense grief harder to cope with.

Sometimes people will think about what their loved one experienced, wrongly feel they may be to blame, or feel anger towards the person responsible for the death, who may also be someone they love.

TRAUMA

Because domestic abuse and domestic homicide can have an immediate and long-term effect on your feelings, emotions and behaviour, they can result in you experiencing trauma.

A trauma is something that happens to you that is overwhelming and can prevent you feeling safe and secure. It can be a physical thing like an accident, an emotional thing like an argument or something more terrifying and frightening like you experienced with your family. And you may need specialist help to recover from the impact of the terrifying experience.

It can be helpful to know a bit about the common reactions so that you identify how you respond and what might help you when you feel overwhelmed with thoughts and feelings.



TRAUMA

Trauma response can vary significantly depending on your age but some of the noticeable emotional and physical symptoms are:

- Reliving the trauma
- Sleeping difficulties
- Problems concentrating
- Nightmares connected to the trauma
- Thoughts that break through or interrupt what you are thinking or doing – sometimes these are pictures or sensations and can be literal memories or disjointed memories
- Expectation of future disaster
- Always expecting something negative to happen and having a sense of dread (hyper vigilance)
- No longer feeling pleasure doing activities you used to enjoy
- Having little or no energy and feeling demotivated
- Wrongly feeling that you are to blame for the traumatic incident
- Misdirected anger – that may come out in words or physical aggression. This could be directed at yourself or towards 'safe' family members or friends.

“
Finding people who are soothing without being a source of trauma can be difficult, but will be helpful.
”

Talking things through with family, friends or a professional (such as a trusted teacher, counsellor or social worker) can be useful to help work out who is trustworthy and how you know.



ANGER



There are many reasons why you might feel angry.

For example, you may feel anger for something you think that you did or did not do which you think contributed to the death of your loved one.

You may feel anger towards the person who has died. This may be because you didn't get the chance to say goodbye, or you may feel that you have been abandoned by the person dying.

“ Anger is an understandable response to bereavement and it is something that the majority of children and young people will encounter as they grieve. ”

“ It is okay to say "I'm feeling really angry today" because that too can help you to channel your anger in a safe way. ”

You may feel anger because you are dealing with strong emotions by yourself.

You may also feel angry because you were so young that you aren't able to remember your parent or family member, or you may even feel jealous of those who do have memories of them.

It is also okay to feel anger towards the person who has died and that this is a natural response and not something you should feel guilty about. If you do feel angry, perhaps try getting rid of your anger on a pillow or go for a run – or tell someone you trust.



SADNESS



Bereaved children and young people will experience some sort of 'depression' or sadness as they grieve.

This sadness can be physical. For example, you may not feel like eating, you might feel tired and not interested in previous hobbies or sports. Some children and young people complain of feeling 'heavy' or feeling weak.

You may find you become 'confused', forget things or become absent minded. This is natural. Your mind will have been so consumed by questions, guilt, fear, anxiety, etc. following the death of your parent or family member that you are bound to be confused.

Children who have lost someone close to them can suffer from fear and anxiety. Sometimes they may be worried that someone else close to them might die or that they too might die.

Some bereaved children and young people become anxious in case they forget what the person who died looked like and their voice. If you feel like this, it is important to discuss your worries.

LONELINESS



A child who has lost a parent may not only be grieving and missing their parent, but also missing the life they used to have.

Children may miss their old home, bedroom, school, friends, toys, pets or experiences (such as dancing lessons).

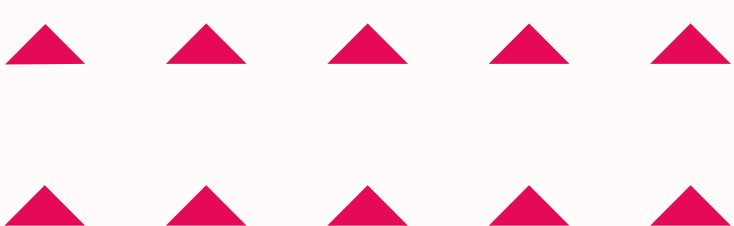
The list can be long and it will be different for every child. Children sometimes try to hide how they feel and pretend to feel better than they really are.

Children often find it difficult to talk about the death of a parent and the things they miss, or they may feel bad about having these feelings.

It's good to remember your parent or family member, talk about them and remember the nice times.

You may find it difficult to talk to new friends or old friends about what has happened. You may not feel able to talk about them in case it makes others in your family sad.

Living with bereavement and loss can be a very lonely and confusing time.



CONFUSION



Losing a parent can be a very confusing time.

Children can have conflicting emotions so you may feel happy but still be sad and miss your parent or family member.

A child may have good support from their wider family but those family members may have differing views about what happened and why. This can bring conflict and confusion.

Family members may have their own ideas and blame or judge a particular individual for what happened.

Children sometimes think that they are being told what emotions they should or should not have.

Adults also have their own way of grieving and it can seem to children that adults do not understand what they are going through.

NUMBNESS



There are times when bereaved children and young people don't feel emotions such as anger, sadness, loneliness or confusion but rather they feel emotionally numb.

This is a normal reaction, which can occur if you lose someone suddenly and unexpectedly.

A child or young person should not feel guilty for feeling numb, it doesn't mean you don't care about the person who has died.

Feeling emotionally numb can be very distressing because after a loved one dies you expect to feel upset and sad.

A child or young person may think there is something wrong with them but it's not uncommon to feel numb. How long the numbness lasts is very individual.

Confusion, numbness and anger are all normal feelings when it comes to grief. It's okay to feel this way.



Help, advice and support



If a person (child or adult) is in immediate danger, call the police on 999.

Black Country Women's Aid

Supporting people of all ages who are survivors of abuse and exploitation.
www.blackcountrywomensaid.co.uk 0121 553 0090 Monday–Friday, 9am–5pm.
24-hour helpline: 0121 552 6448.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Hope Again

www.hopeagain.org.uk
0808 808 1677 Monday–Friday,
9:30am–5pm.

Learn from other young people how to cope with grief and feel less alone when someone dies.

Winston's Wish

www.winstonswish.org (live chat)
08088 020 021 Monday–Friday, 9am–5pm. Calls are free and confidential.
Email ask@winstonswish.org

Emotional and practical bereavement support to children, young people and those who care for them.

Young Minds

www.youngminds.org.uk
For urgent, 24/7 mental health support, text YM to 85258. Texts are free from most providers.

Childline

www.childline.org.uk 0800 1111
A free, confidential service where you can talk about anything, 24/7.

ADULTS

Ask Marc

www.askmarc.org.uk
0121 289 6402
Email: info@askmarc.org.uk

Specialist support for men and boys who have experienced domestic abuse, stalking, rape and sexual abuse.

Women's Aid

www.womensaid.org.uk
Women's Aid provide national online advice and support. This is not an emergency service.

Men's Advice Line

www.mensadviceline.org.uk
0808 8010327
Confidential helpline, email and webchat service for male victims of domestic abuse.

Refuge

www.refuge.org.uk
0808 2000 247
Support and confidential advice 24/7, plus refuge accommodation or other specialist domestic violence services.