

FACILITATOR'S MANUAL

**THROUGH THE EYES OF
CHILDREN WORKBOOKS**

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For additional information on family violence
and how to support families and their
children struggling with domestic violence:

Virginia Family Violence and Sexual Assault Hotline
1-800-838-8238 (V/tty)
Free confidential. 24 hours a day

National Domestic Violence Hotline
1-800-799-SAFE (7233)
1-800-787-3224 (TTY)

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INTRODUCTION

Through the Eyes of Children is a series of booklets intended to help children who have been exposed to family violence. The booklets operate from the premise that children have a basic human right to be protected from violence. They were created with the intention of generating awareness of how family violence might be experienced through the eyes of children. The booklets provide opportunities for a child reading the story to identify with each character in the series and then project their own thoughts, feelings, internalized beliefs, and understandings of their world into the interactive activities provided throughout. The booklets help children learn how to protect themselves and how to seek help when they need it.

Thoughtful narratives attempt to provide nonjudgmental language to purposefully create emotional safety while approaching difficult topics; thus, increasing opportunities for the child to experience safe communication. Optimally, the booklets would be used in the homes of both the offending and nonoffending parent where family violence has occurred, increasing the probability that the child will not take responsibility for either parent's feelings and behaviors, and ultimately learning that violence is unacceptable and that respectful behavior is an obtainable goal. In addition, they are designed to be flexible enough to be used with a domestic violence counselor, school counselor, social worker, therapist, or other caring adult who will be able to process with the child any feelings and thoughts that are generated from the stories.

The booklets offer opportunities for children to share feelings and choose non-violent ways to successfully solve problems and manage overwhelming feelings. They offer a vehicle to begin helping children from violent homes learn how to express their feelings in healthy ways. The booklets can help identify choices that children can make in situations where they have not been given a choice about what happens to them and may feel powerless and helpless. They also help children to identify their own personal powers and underused strengths. Coping and self protection skills are offered as well as opportunities to identify and manage strong feelings.

THERE ARE THREE BOOKLETS IN THE SERIES

Safety Planning Through the Eyes of Children, Ages 3-5

Visitation Through the Eyes of Children, Ages 6-11

Family Court Through the Eyes of Children, Ages 12-15

Each Booklet strives to work towards safety and healing. By opening windows of opportunity for children and their families to explore their own inner resources and strengths, alternatives to violence and controlling behaviors can be considered and practiced in daily life.

The following discrete goals are addressed in all three booklets.

- Facilitating an individual safety plan.
- Identifying an external and internal safe place.
- Acknowledging and accepting what we have control over.
- Knowing what to do when parents fight and when abusive behaviors occur.
- Identifying self protection skills.
- Reducing self blame.
- Teaching stress reduction and relaxation techniques.
- Encouraging self empowerment.
- Promoting respectful pro-social behaviors.
- Increasing the capacity to manage and contain overwhelming feelings during everyday activities.

HOW TO USE THE BOOKLETS

The booklets were designed to be read with a caring adult, but not necessarily the child's parent or primary caregiver. For simplicity, this manual will refer to this person as the "parent".

The parent needs to be able to help the child structure their experience, provide empathy and reflective feedback, foster creative responses for interactive topics and help the child manage and contain feelings and behaviors that may arise from the booklet's content. It is not recommended that children read the booklets on their own.

Whenever possible, involving a parent should always be attempted. It is often difficult to access the parent when children are in shelters, transitional housing or are in individual therapy, however, it is important to make a strong effort. Involving the parent increases effectiveness of the safety plan. The parents have the most influence with their children to support them in developing alternatives to unsafe or maladaptive behaviors. Nurturing parental support can increase efficacy in helping children to rid themselves of the internalized beliefs that they are helpless to protect themselves or must always protect themselves and cannot trust anyone. It is also beneficial to the parent to be involved. The interactive activities increase the parent's awareness to what is going on inside their child's head and increases their attunement and insight into their child's emotional needs.

PROVIDE INFORMATION TO BOTH PARENTS

Involving the offending parent will greatly increase the potential for the child to use their safety plan. When both parents can use a safety plan, the child will feel more empowered to use the plan and begin to develop stronger self protection skills.

MEET WITH THE PARENT FIRST

Whenever possible, the facilitator should read the booklet with the parent before it is read with the child. This will provide the parent with an opportunity to process and identify their own thoughts, feelings and beliefs about their family and provide the facilitator with information to help the parent address potential triggers that may upset them before they read the booklet with their child. Even if the parent and child cannot meet together it is good practice to always review the content of the booklet with the parent first.

Respecting the parents executive position will create trust. When families are in the midst of a domestic violence crisis it may initially appear that the parent is not physically or emotionally available. One might be tempted to forgo attempts to engage with the parent and to start with the child. However, a caring empathic facilitator will be able to access the parent on some level. Role-modeling trustworthy behavior that exemplifies that the parent is capable, strong and can be in charge demonstrates empowerment and facilitates safety and competency. This allows the parent to become more available to the process and ultimately more available to their children.

Pay attention to the affect of the parent and child to determine if they should continue or stop reading the booklet. What is the tone and pitch of the voice, posture and facial expressions? How close is the child to the parent when the story is being read? Does the child make eye contact with parent? Is the child able to use their parent to help them feel better and lower their stress level? If the child is becoming more distressed by participating in the booklet activity how can the parent sooth them?

MEETING WITH THE NON-OFFENDING PARENT AND THE CHILD

The booklets are intended to facilitate empathic responses and increased insight into the internal world of children. Therefore, it is important to review the booklets with the non-offending parent. It is important to note that the parent may have strong emotions when they read the book due to their own personal experiences with domestic violence. Making time to process the parent's concerns and fears can significantly strengthen the quality of the parent child interactions while reading the booklets together. In addition, it will facilitate a discussion with the parents for the facilitator to assess their readiness to participate and their understanding of the booklet content.

CONSIDERATIONS:

- Assess for safety i.e. is there a court order of protection in place that will establish clear boundaries on unsafe behaviors?
- Assess if the child talks about safety planning during visitations with the offending parent, if it will put him at risk for negative repercussions.
- Do the parents agree that one or both have shown their MAD in unsafe ways?
- Avoid risks when meeting with families where there has been violence. Be cautious not to put non-offending parent or child in danger.
- Recommend that both parents participate in the curriculum.
- Assess for readiness of the parent. i.e. can the parent meet with the facilitator and remain focused without becoming emotionally immobilized. If the parent is able to participate with facilitator on some reciprocal level this is a good indicator that they are ready to meet with facilitator and the child.
- If the parent is not emotionally or physically present enough to read the booklets with their child, ask permission for the child to read the booklets without them. Review the booklet with the parent before presenting it to the child.
- Prepare the parent for being fully present by asking them to visualize a safe place before reading the booklet with the child which will help them to manage their own feelings. (see Appendix A)
- Prepare the parent to respond to the child with guidelines provided for each booklet and to refrain from comments and dialogue that will distract from the child's ability to tolerate their own affect when reading the booklet.
- Prepare the parent to contain their own big feelings; thus enabling them to help their children contain their big feelings.

MEETING WITH THE OFFENDING PARENT AND THE CHILD

Standing up for what is right and wrong is an important and crucial element in fostering healthy child development and preparing children for living independently in a social community. Providing education to the court system, judges, attorneys, therapists, child protection workers and child advocates on how these booklets could be used with the offending parent could enhance continuity of services and increase the probability of healing and be instrumental as an additional tool in stopping abusive interactions within families.

CONSIDERATIONS:

- Assess for safety i.e. is there a court order of protection in place? Has the offending parent adhered to the court's rulings?
- Set clear limits on hostile and defiant behaviors in a supportive, calm, direct manner before starting.
- Can the offending parent acknowledge their responsibility for the violence?
- Do the parents agree that one or both have shown their MAD in unsafe ways?
- Recommend that both parents participate in the curriculum. It may need to be court ordered for an offending parent who denies their responsibility for the violence but can acknowledge that there has been fighting.
- Assess the readiness of the parent to participate i.e. If the parent cannot accept limits from the facilitator, if they are blaming the victim or are unable to be redirected to the here and now of the booklet content.
- Assess the parents understanding of their child's stage of development and the impact of family violence.
- Assess the parent's understanding of the importance of their role in the child's ability to regulate their behavior and feelings based on how they see and internalize their parent's behaviors.
- If the facilitator cannot work with the offending parent (due to limitations in funding sources, safety issues or conflict of interests) a good family therapy agency that understands domestic violence theory should be recommended.
- ALWAYS review the booklet with the offending parent before reading it with the parent and the child together.
- Be clear with the offending parent what is helpful to the child and what is not.
- Encourage the offending parent to be part of the healing process as a responsible caring and nurturing parent.
- Assume that the parent wants to do what is best for their child and does not have the skills rather than the parent being resistant and oppositional.
- Provide positive feedback to the parent that you understand that they want to help their child try to feel better and this is a tool to do so.

- Be prepared to role model safe appropriate boundaries.
- Be prepared to use language that is non blaming such as “your family was not able to show their MAD in safe ways”.
- Be prepared to explain and validate why the offending parent should be included in the educational process of using Through the Eyes of Children curriculum.
- Keep in mind the message of peace and non-violence that is being woven through out the books.
- Provide encouragement, support and praise to the parent for participating in the child’s emotional wellbeing.
- Remind the parent about having a vision for the future of having the system out of their lives and how they need to do that by peaceful communication and non-violent behavior.

MEETING WITH BOTH PARENTS AND THE CHILD

There are situations when there will be opportunities to work with both parents who are reunifying and attempting to heal from family violence. When both parents can acknowledge that they want their family to be safe and work together towards that goal there is tremendous opportunity for growth and healing. Review the booklets in a meeting with the parents before having a family session. When both parents agree to work towards a safe home the booklets are a strong tool to bring awareness and clarity to what needs to happen to prevent further violence.

CONSIDERATIONS:

- Assess for safety and readiness of both parents to participate.
- If an protection order has been in place does it allow for safe contact between the parents?
- Is there a safety plan in place for the non-offending parent?
- Set clear limits on hostile and defiant behaviors in a supportive, calm, direct manner before starting.
- Do the parents agree that one or both have shown their MAD in unsafe ways and agree to refrain from blaming behaviors?
- Does the family believe that there is no longer a risk of violent attacks from the offending parent?
- Do the parents have the insight that their behavior directly influences how their children behave and how they learn how to function in the world?

- The non-offending parent must be able to feel safe and be able to have a voice.
- The offending parent has taken responsibility for violent behavior and is willing to actively participate in session.
- Encourage the parents to discuss the child's feelings and to share ideas with the child.

MEETING WITH THE CHILD ALONE

There will be times when the facilitator may need to meet with the child alone. Some examples of when this may occur are; when a parent has read the booklet and agrees that the child could benefit but feels they are not emotionally ready to read the booklets with their child, when a child is in individual therapy and there is not access to the parent, or if the child is in a residential program.

CONSIDERATIONS:

- Assess safety issues.
- Assess the child's self-protection skills.
- Assess the child's level of trauma. Does the child need to be referred to a professional therapist with experience in working with traumatized children?
- Assess the child's ability to trust an adult.
- Assess if the child can identify a safe happy calm place. Perhaps they have never felt these feelings and do not know how to identify a safe place.
- Provide a safe place activity before beginning, this activity can also assist the facilitator in assessing the child's capacity to develop inner resources.
- The facilitator should read the manual and booklets before reading with the child.
- Help the child to understand that physical and emotional violence are not showing their MAD in safe ways. This is important to address in a non-judgmental, yet reinforcing manner, to facilitate trust and avoid inadvertently alienating the child because they do not want to be abandoned or rejected by one or both parents.
- Provide a container activity.
- Teach relaxation and anxiety reducing skills.
- Spend time discussing feelings and sharing ideas.
- Follow up with the parent(s).

SAFETY PLANNING BOOKLET

The safety planning booklet was designed for children ages 3-5. These booklets were created with the intention of providing a user friendly tool to support children in strengthening their self protection skills and recognizing what to do when fighting occurs in their home. In addition, the booklets provide a clear message that the violence was not the child's fault.

Providing services for families where domestic violence has occurred must focus on safety issues. Safety planning is an essential piece of any intervention being provided whether it be a child advocate, domestic violence counselor, family therapist or child protection worker.

In addition to the overarching goals of all the booklets, the safety booklet addresses the following goals:

- The child and parents will learn how to develop a safety plan on a developmental level appropriate for the child's age.
- Identification of mad feelings, in a developmentally appropriate way, that helps young children understand that their family shows their MAD in unsafe scary ways.
- The child will enhance safety planning and self-protection skills.
- The facilitator will identify potential emotional trauma and increase insight into the child's needs and be able to make additional referrals as needed.
- The parent will increase empathic responses to their child's internal world.

The following breakdown of the booklet provides the facilitator with options on how to expand on the content and meet the individual child's needs.

Page 1-2

Jenna is humanized to promote identification with the child reader. Encourage the child reader to share what is important in their own lives and to promote identification with the main character. Facilitates breaking the secret of family violence. Shows their MAD feelings in a safe way.

Page 3-4

Introduces the statement that Jenna's family does not know how to express their MAD in safe ways. Safely opens a window to discuss how the child reader expresses their MAD. Puts responsibility for Jenna's learning inappropriate ways to manage her feelings back on the adults.

Page 5-6

Identifies Jenna's internalized feelings of fearful and scary situations giving her a voice to name them. These pages may trigger trauma memories for the child or the adult reader. Be prepared to have a follow-up container activity (see Appendix B).

Page 7-8

Introduces safety planning. The facilitator might ask if the child has heard of a safety plan before .

Page 9-10

Interactive pages to facilitate the child's participation and develop resources to enhance emotional and physical safety. Multisensory activities facilitate integration of traumatic memories and promotes alternative coping strategies to violent responses.

Page 11

Interactive practice page for writing phone and address. The child reader is encouraged to gain a sense of their surroundings, where they are and what is around them should they need to access help.

Page 12, 13, 14

Addresses internalized memories, nightmares and feelings that children often have and do not know how to express. The facilitator might ask the child to tell them about a bad dream they've had or have them draw the bad dream then draw something that will help them feel safe should the bad dream reoccur. (see Appendix C) .

Page 15

Reinforces that adults are ultimately responsible for keeping their children safe. When reading with the parent and the child, the facilitator can ask the parent if this is true that Jenna cannot stop the fighting.

Page 17,18

The booklet ends reinforcing positive strength based skills that the child can learn in order to live with their memories, feelings, thoughts and family. The facilitator can continue to practice with the child how to visualize their safe place and how to bring the image to their mind when they need to. (see Appendix A).

VISITATION BOOKLET

The visitation booklet was designed for children ages 6-11. These booklets were created with the intention of providing a user friendly tool to assist children with problematic issues regarding safety and visitation where family violence has occurred. Issues of emotional and physical safety are addressed. The booklet looks toward strengthening self protection skills and recognizing what to do when fighting occurs in the home. In addition, the booklet provides specific self-soothing strategies that may help the child if a safe adult is not available to them during visitations.

Providing services to families where domestic violence has occurred must focus on safety issues that provide emotional as well as physical safety. Children learn by role modeling and imitation. They need to have repetitive and reparative experiences to assist them in being able to learn and be able to access effective strategies for helping them deal with problematic issues that occur before during and after visitations. Planning for safety, emotionally and physically, is a key element in responding empathically to a child's needs who have lived through family violence. Supporting families to participate in developing safe visitation plans is an essential piece of interventions to be provided whether it be by a child advocate, domestic violence counselor, family therapist or child protection worker.

In addition to the overarching goals of all the booklets, the visitation booklet addresses the following goals:

- The child will identify with Michael and be able to externalize any internalized thoughts.
- The parent will increase insight into the child's internalized world and provide empathic responding.
- The child will gain coping strategies when visiting with the offending parent.
- The child will identify that rules are not the same in different homes.
- The child will gain calming and soothing skills.
- The facilitator will identify potential emotional trauma and increase insight into the child's needs and be able to make additional referrals as needed.

The following breakdown of the booklet provides the facilitator with options on how to expand on the content and meet the individual child's needs.

Page 1-2

Michael is humanized to promote identification with the child reader. Encourage the child to share what is important in their own lives and to promote identification with the main character. Facilitate breaking the secret of family violence. Facilitator may comment "Oh, Michael lives in two homes just like you do" or "I wonder if you thought you were the only one that this happened to".

Page 3

The violence is named in very clear language. The facilitator might choose to assist the child in identifying that Michael's parents are living apart due to the family violence. This is a good place to stress it was not Michael's fault.

Page 4, 5, 6

Promote feelings identification for the reader. Interactive page for the facilitator to encourage the child to participate. If the parent is present encourage them to validate the child's feelings. The facilitator should encourage short simple empathic responses. Help the parent to understand how to contain potential traumatic content before reading of the booklet occurs with the child.

Page 7

This page identifies how Michael's parents hurtful words about each other are emotionally harmful to him. The facilitator needs to be prepared to help the child with a menu of things that Michael can do to feel better if the child refuses to speak or cannot come up with anything. i.e.: "one thing Michael could do is....."

Page 8, 9

A multisensory approach helps to integrate the child's experience and works toward holistic healing. The facilitator can encourage multisensory dialogue with the child by saying "Wow, that must be really hard for Michael to **FEEL** so torn, to **HEAR** his parents say those words and to **SEE** his parents fighting, I bet he can just about **TASTE** and **SMELL** how angry his parents feel when they argue about visitation".

Page 10, 11

This section identifies Michael's feelings when he goes on visitations while firmly putting responsibility back on the adults for keeping the visits emotionally and physically safe. If a cooperative parent is reading with their child, the facilitator might wonder aloud if the parent thinks that Michael's parents love him. When they say yes the facilitator could then ask what the parent reader thinks Michael's parents could do to help him feel loved instead of scared if fighting occurs when he goes on visits.

Page 11

Different rules in different homes are highlighted. The facilitator might ask the child reader how the rules are different in each parent's home.

Page 12,13

These pages offer the opportunity for the child to externalize any internal thoughts. The facilitator should be prepared to help the animals talk if the child cannot.

Page 14

This page offers resources and opportunities for the child to learn skills that will help to develop healthy coping strategies. The facilitator can expand the content in the moment or with follow-up sessions.

Page 15 –20

These pages provide concrete ways that Michael can learn how to promote emotional and physical safety. The importance of safety planning and planning for visitation are reinforced. The facilitator can explore with the child what rights they feel that they have while reinforcing that all children have the right to feel emotionally and physically safe.

FAMILY COURT BOOKLET

The family court booklet identifies with children ages of 12 -15. This booklet was created with the intention of providing a user friendly tool to support children and help them understand about the complex issues and feelings that arise once a family goes to court. Changes, loss of a known family structure that is able to govern itself, loss of power and control in decision making and abdication of the family's rights to the court are just a few of the devastating effects of family violence and court involvement.

In addition to the overarching goals of all the booklets the family court booklet strives toward the following additional goals:

- To gain understanding of court orders.
- To gain understanding of protective orders and court ordered visitation.
- Learning self-soothing skills and managing anxiety when going to court.
- Identifying potential problems and possible solutions during visitation.
- Empowering children to develop inner resources.
- Identifying potential trauma issues and increasing insight into the child's needs in order to be able to make referrals as needed.

The following breakdown of the booklet provides the facilitator with options on how to expand on the content and meet the individual child's needs.

Page 1-2

The booklet begins by humanizing the main character as an average 13 year old and identifying what is important to her. The facilitator might identify with the child things that are important, such as friends, age related activities and peer groups. The facilitator can begin to assess the child's social network and if the child has friends.

Page 3, 4

Begins to tell Katie's story. Katie's parents have separated and had to go to court for a protective order. The facilitator might encourage a dialogue with the child about what they thought Katie was thinking and feeling about this. The facilitator might ask "I wonder what Katie's friend Mel thought about Katie's family going to court".

Page 5,6

Here Katie goes to court. Who the child identifies with when reading the story can help the facilitator to understand how the child has interpreted their own experience and how they view their world.

Page 7

Questions are designed here to assist the child to begin to think of ways that encourage breaking the secret of family violence and to recognize the complexity of feelings and beliefs that develop out of living in a home with family violence. The child may need encouragement to participate.

Page 8

This page provides an underlying message of the ambiguity and evasiveness of the truth, especially when a family goes to court and is court ordered to tell the truth. Children witness their parents telling stories that often portray a scenario that is totally different from how the child has internalized their view of a scene. Often, parents tell differing stories in court further confusing “the truth” for a child. The facilitator can open a dialogue that questions the child’s ability to trust or believe in others to tell the truth.

Page 9

Here the facilitator can assess what inner resources the child has by using this interactive page and assess what skills they may need to build and strengthen.

Page 10

This interactive word find supports the child in identifying feelings in a non-threatening form that may otherwise feel overwhelming .

Page 11,13

Through reading this checklist with the child, the facilitator can assess what the viable possibilities are for creating a safety plan for visitation and alternative ways Katie’s parents could be supportive of her.

Page 14

This interactive page promotes problem-solving and encourages solutions. The facilitator could explore what solutions might work for her and encourage a dialogue of additional problems that the child may be having.

For example:

- What does the child fear will change?
- What stays the same when a family changes? What is different?
- Discuss and validate feelings.
- Place responsibility for family pain where it belongs.
- Discuss justice related issues.

Page 15

This page reinforces the belief that people can affect change in their own lives. The facilitator can encourage exploration of resources available to Katie and how those same resources might be available to the child.

Page 16

This quick and easy maze creates a metaphor for the internalized complexities of human emotions while clearly conveying that it is all of our emotions that make us whole and human. The facilitator can expand on the theme of how to accept and manage all of our feelings in order to feel whole, connected and anchored to the earth.

Page 17

Creating a safe place. This is an important step in creating a peaceful mind regardless of the chaos, terror and horror that may be part of our past or present experience. The facilitator can help the child to revisit this activity until they can visualize their safe place whenever they need to (see Appendix A).

Page 18

The facilitator can assist the child to come up with a container for any feelings they have that may need to be metaphorically contained until they choose to take them out and explore these feelings (see appendix B). The message is that one's feelings do not have to dictate how we behave and respond to events and people around us. We can choose to contain them and take them out when it is safe to do so.

Page 19

This page reinforces having a predetermined safety plan.

THE RAINBOWS

Family violence, by its very nature, affects all the individuals in a family. Their bodies, hearts, minds and spirits are affected in hurtful ways.

The physical and emotional abuse inflicted in violent homes are most commonly addressed. However, the child's spirit is hurt by the pain inflicted by a trusted adult. The spirit of the victim-parent is affected by the horror of living in fear of someone they once loved and trusted and may still love and care about. The spirit of the abuser is in pain for inflicting the abuse on another human being especially one's own child and life partner.

The spiritual hope of alleviating the pain of family violence is addressed through the metaphor of the rainbow in every illustration in the booklets. Healing from family violence benefits from a holistic approach which takes into account, the spirit, mind and body in the context of the social environment. The rainbows offer hope and encouragement that families can choose to live without violence in their future.

Color therapy suggests that the use of the seven colors of the rainbow promotes the development of personal power in children. Recognizing and taking responsibility for our personal power is an important insight into understanding how our behavior shapes our own development and the impact our behavior has on others.

- Have the children find the rainbow in each drawing.
- Encourage hope and healing through the use of color and spiritual connections.

AFTERWORD

Although the booklets have been written for children, anecdotal experience has demonstrated that adults, regardless of what capacity they are using the booklets, may experience strong feelings when reading them. Support may be needed for those reading the booklets regardless of their age. Individuals who are providing services are cautioned that the booklets themselves will not be sufficient in affecting lasting change in families where domestic violence has permeated the family's functioning, in some cases for generations. Families who possess the capacity to be flexible, promote healing, are open to growth and attempt to meet individual family needs in healthy healing ways will be open to using the information provided. The booklets can be used as a supportive tool often within a variety of services to encourage breaking the cycle of violence, and learning non-violent ways of communication and expressing feelings in interpersonal relationships.

Families where violence has occurred can be unpredictable and safety issues should always be considered. In some cases it should be assessed whether it is safe to use the booklets. It is suggested that if the booklets are used following the instruction manual there is little risk of doing further harm to families seeking relief from family violence. It needs to be understood that certainly these booklets cannot stop a problem of violence between family members. They are designed to open doorways towards motivation to change. The overarching goal of the booklets is to motivate change. The welfare of children is a strong motivator to choose non-violent communication to live our lives. All families have a past, a present and a future together or apart.

The booklets are intended to be used as a tool to support children and families in identifying and trusting their own inner resources and strengths. Family violence is not a family empowerment model and does not teach children how to develop personal safety, how to believe in inner strength, the capacity to tolerate their own feelings or how to be in relationships without giving up their power or abusing others. These booklets are a stepping stone to provide children and families with an opportunity to honor each individual's experience and begin to change maladaptive patterns in relationships and affect change in the family system. It is recommended that continued follow-up services be provided to families for at least a year after the family violence has stopped.

Appendix A

SAFE PLACE

When a child visualizes a safe place they begin to learn calming and soothing skills. Creating an internal safe place can be an important self-protection for children living in homes where family violence has occurred or still does occur. Sadly, many children from violent homes have never felt safe and cannot describe this feeling. Assess if a child can visually create an appropriate safe place. If not, help them by providing additional supports, resources and ideas. Many children have used the therapy office or a domestic violence counselor's office for their safe place. Descriptive words and drawings that connote feelings of safety, happiness and feeling calm should be encouraged.

Some ideas are listed below on how to support children in creating a safe place.

- Teach visualization skills to create a safe place if child cannot think of a place that is safe. Some children have felt really safe and happy on their birthday, or on a vacation, or maybe at school with a favorite teacher. You could have them make up an imaginary place that feels safe, happy and calm. Teach deep breathing and relaxation skills with the safe place.
- Ask the child to draw a place where they feel happy, safe and calm (imaginary if necessary). Help the child to create a place that is safe and cannot be contaminated. For example, it would not be a safe place if a child drew a cave but then said there would be bugs in it that would scare him.
- Use clay to sculpt a place that feels safe.
- Create a song to sing that will feel safe that the child could sing in their head when feeling scared.
- Ask the child to write a story or a poem that creates safety and a visual image that they can think of when needing to feel safe and calm.
- Ask the child to make a collage of a safe place with a group of pictures, words, and found objects that create a feeling that is right for the child.

Appendix B

CONTAINERS

Containers provide children with additional internal resources to metaphorically contain their overwhelming feelings. Containment is an important skill towards affect and behavioral management. There is no right or wrong. The idea is to begin to teach children skills to self sooth so that they can manage their feelings.

- Ask the child to visualize a container that has a strong cover and to put the overwhelming feelings in this secure container. Some children can see pictures in their head very easily some will need to be taught how to visualize.
- Ask the child to draw a picture of a container that can hold strong feelings. Help the child understand that the feelings are not going to be sealed away forever, just kept safely away until they are ready to feel them again. Reassure the child they can and will be able to manage their strong feelings.
- Ask the child to sculpt a container that has form and substance out of self-hardening clay, write the feelings on small pieces of paper and then put them in the container after it has hardened.
- Have the child put their strong feelings in a box and take them out when they are ready to.
- Make a point of putting away the booklets and any toys and supplies that may have been used when reading them. Create a secure container to metaphorically put the work down and enter a different space before ending the session with the child.
- Ask the child to write or draw all of the strong feelings on a 5X7 piece of paper and put them in a frame to contain them. When the feelings are too intense have the child physically turn the frame over until they are ready to manage the feelings. The child can then learn to visualize the framed feelings at other times when the feelings are overwhelming or seem “too big” to manage.

Appendix C

NIGHTMARES

Nightmares are underreported by children. Nighttime, when we are asleep is a very vulnerable time. Children may have nightmares and not talk about them. Often we dismiss children's nightmares as only a dream, tell them there are no monsters and to go back to sleep. Children who have lived with violence in their home are susceptible to unresolved trauma, which can manifest as bad, scary dreams. Below are suggestions to help children resolve traumatic memories that may surface as nightmares.

- Use creative visualization before bedtime. Several good resources are:
 - Nightmare Help** by Anne Sayre Wiseman
 - Moon Beam, a book of meditations for children** by Maureen Garth
 - Starbright Children's Meditations** By Maureen Garth
 - You Have Dragons** by Kathryn Cave and Nick Maland
 - Color Therapy for Children** by Maryanne Hoffman
 - Creative Visualization with Children** by Jenifer Day
- Create physical containers with the child. It can be a box the child decorates or a coffee can. The child chooses to write down their feelings or bad dreams before bed and puts them into the container. This metaphorically contains the feelings before bed.
- Have the child draw the nightmare and put it away. A trusted adult can take charge of the drawing and at the same time support the child's innate ability to heal and handle their scary feelings and to put them away.
- Create a feelings tree and keep it next to the child's bed. The child can hang their feelings on the tree before bedtime.
- Have the child create their own personal spirit guide that will keep them to feel safe before bedtime. This might be a god, an angel or a real or imagined animal.
- Sing songs of power, protection and strength before bed. Music is processed differently than words and can be effective in creating information in the brain that will be accessed when the child needs support.

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NOTES

For additional information on family violence
and how to support families and their
children struggling with domestic violence:

Virginia Family Violence and Sexual Assault Hotline
1-800-838-8238 (V/tty)
Free confidential. 24 hours a day

National Domestic Violence Hotline
1-800-799-SAFE (7233)
1-800-787-3224 (TTY)

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