

I Have the Right to Be Safe

Confidentiality Contract:

- 1) You have the right to talk without fear. What we talk about today will not be repeated to anyone else. The exceptions to this rule are:
 - If you tell me that someone is making you unsafe, I will have to report that person to people who must help keep kids safe (DCYF).
 - If you tell me that you want to hurt yourself or someone else, and how you want to do it, I will have to report that to your (mom or dad) and to DCYF.
- 2) You have the right to say what you want to say, or to not talk if you don't want to.
- 3) You have the right to leave when you want to leave.
- 4) You have the right to keep our conversation private. Your (parent—adult victim) will be asked not to pressure you to talk about what we said or did here. However, you can share it with (her/him) if you want to.
- 5) (Ask child if there is any rule they would like you to observe, and write it here only if you can keep it.) _____

Child's Sign of Agreement: _____

Advocate's Sign of Agreement: _____

What you think your parents do WELL:

Parent A: _____

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Parent B: _____

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

What rules your parents have to keep you SAFE and HAPPY:

Parent A: _____

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

Parent B: _____

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

What rules you'd like your parents to remember about being a good parent for YOU:

1. I am a kid, and I have the right to be a kid:

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____

2. I am a kid, and I have the right to be taken care of by you:

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____

3. I am a kid, and I have the right to be/feel safe in my home:

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____

If your parent(s) forget the above rules, what you can do to STAY SAFE & HAPPY:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. Learn how to use a '911' cell phone, and keep it in a safe place to use in an emergency.
7. Who I can talk to if things are scaring/worrying me:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Safety Planning with Child Witnesses of DV

By Kathy Jones, DVSur5r Network

Perpetrators of coercive control often parent in irresponsible, dangerous or neglectful ways. Children from homes where there is domestic abuse need to know how to stay safe. Children who witness Domestic Violence are often reluctant to talk to strangers, particularly about scary or worrisome things that happen in their homes, and they are often quick to internalize negative messages about their parents. It is important to have a conversation with children that: 1) validates the concerns they have about the things they have experienced, 2) allows them to say whatever they really think or feel about either parent/figure, good or bad, 3) takes cues from the children, and 4) leaves the children feeling empowered to respond in situations where their parent(s) make them feel unsafe. (*Note: all of the following examples or quotes have been taken from contacts with children who have witnessed various forms of domestic abuse.*)

- 1) What are some of the things that your parents do well?

Usually heard about adult victims

“...takes care of me when I’m sick.”

“...feeds me stuff I like to eat.”

“...takes me to my sports (activities, etc.).”

“...reads to me/helps me with my homework.”

“...remembers my birthday/days that are important to me.”

Usually heard about perpetrators

“...buys me things.”

From regular experience, very few children who witness DV will actually identify that the perpetrator spends meaningful time, doing activities that the children want to do. Perpetrators often don’t know their own children’s birthdays. When the child identifies a positive that one parent does, asking “What about (the other parent)?” often results in a negative response (sometimes with explanation). Listen for imbalance in parenting styles that make children feel unsafe.

- 2) Tell me about the rules (*your parents have in your house*) OR (*in your mom’s and your dad’s homes*) that make you feel SAFE and HAPPY.

(*Ex. “When we’re having tickle fights, and someone says “Stop,” everyone stops.”*)

Generally speaking, children who are witnessing domestic abuse will talk about the adult victim’s “good” rules that imply the perpetrator does something that the children don’t like. (Ex. “When my mom is angry, but not at me, she won’t take it out on me. She’ll talk about it with someone else.”) Simply asking the child the converse question (Ex. “When your dad gets mad at someone else, what happens?”) will often result in a response with an explanation (Ex. “When dad’s girlfriend broke up with him, he screamed at me all day until he made me cry. I think he likes to make me cry.”)

- 3) When parents are (*fighting*) OR (*separated or divorced*), they sometimes become really sad/ angry/upset, and might forget about the rules of being a good parent. Some of these rules are:

- a. ***You’re a kid, and you have the right to be a kid.***

“I have the right to be kept out of the middle of my parent’s arguments.”

“I have the right to love both mom and dad without feeling guilty.”

“I have the right to play and laugh like other kids my age do.”

b. ***You're a kid, and you have the right to be taken care of by your parents.***

"I have the right to be fed when I'm hungry."

"I have the right to expect that mom and dad will take care of their own stuff; I shouldn't have to take care of them."

c. ***You're a kid, and you have the right to feel safe in your home.***

"I have the right to not be sworn at or called bad names."

"I have the right not to fear my parents hurting my pets."

"I have the right to go to sleep without worrying that the yelling and screaming means that someone's going to get hurt."

Let's write down some rules that your parents could follow that would show you they remember what it means to be a good parent to YOU.

4) If your parents forget some of these rules (see #2), what are some things you can do to keep yourself safe? **I can....:**

"Zone out."

"Go to my room and read a book."

"I know it sounds crazy, but I always look for a way out."

Note: Male children will often identify that they can't wait to get to sufficient size to "fight back." Children need to be warned of the dangers of this response: it is NOT ILLEGAL for children to be hit by their parents in NH, and just as we often see victims of DV arrested for self-defense, teen children are more likely than adult perpetrators to be arrested for actions taken in self-defense.

a. Include in a child's safety plan:

"You can take/learn how to use a '911' cell phone to call for help if things get too scary."

"Do you have a friend/neighbor's house you can go to if you need to?"

b. Who can you talk to when things get scary for you at home? (Always leave the name and contact number for an appropriate adult!)