

Coercive Control & Children

According to the Battered Womens Justice project (2012, 2015) in America there are a range of behaviours that a parent who is perpetrator of DVA may engage in that can directly harm or undermine the wellbeing of children. These include

Physical or Sexual Abuse or Neglect of Child: *Decisions and behaviors that directly harm the child's physical safety, security and well-being*

Examples

- Hitting, punching, slapping, pushing child
- Using excessive/coercive discipline
- Refusing to understand/tolerate age-appropriate behavior
- Denying food, clothing, necessary medical care
- Forcing other parent to participate in child abuse
- Abducting or threatening to abduct child
- Exposing child to drugs/alcohol
- Having inappropriate sexual contact
- Exposing child to pornography
- Violating child's physical privacy

Emotional Abuse of Child: *Wide-ranging decisions or behaviors that directly or indirectly harm the child's emotional safety, security, development, and/or well-being*

Examples

- Exposing child to violence
- Exposing child to aftermath of violence
- Modelling bad behaviour
- Harming or threatening to harm animals or pets
- Inducing fear or terror
- Denigrating child's feelings
- Violating child's boundaries
- Calling child names
- Denying support or affection to child
- Making child feel stupid or inadequate
- Interfering with school or homework
- Demanding demonstrations of affection/loyalty
- Micro-managing or monitoring child
- Isolating child from friends or family
- Disrupting child's structure or routines
- Embarrassing, humiliating or shaming child
- Destroying child's toys or personal items
- Promoting gender bias or disrespect of women
- Mocking child's interests or ambitions
- Refusing to meet child's basic emotional needs
- Fluctuating involvement with child
- Creating a chaotic or unpredictable home life
- Threatening to harm or kill parent or child
- Missing visits or appointments
- Saying one thing and doing another
- Breaking promises
- Threatening suicide

Economic Abuse: *Decisions or behaviors that unnecessarily harm the child's economic stability or security*

Examples:

Prioritising own needs

- Refusing to provide available financial support
- Denying other parent access to resources
- Interfering with other parent's work
- Trading money or support for time with child
- Depleting bank accounts
- Destroying other parent's credit
- Preventing other parent's access to credit
- Shutting off utilities
- Disabling vehicles
- Cancelling insurance

Using Child as a Tool of Abuse: *Decisions or behaviors that employ the child to manipulate, control, threaten or harm the other parent*

Examples

- Drawing child into abuse
- Dividing child's loyalties
- Using child to monitor other parent
- Using child to coerce other parent
- Pitting child against other parent
- Hurting child in order to hurt other parent
- Separating children from their siblings
- Using custody to harass other parent
- Encouraging child to disrespect other parent
- Using visitation to access other parent
- Disrupting established visitation schedule
- Rewarding child for rejecting other parent
- Threatening to harm child
- Threatening to seek custody to hurt parent
- Threatening to take child from other parent
- Degrading other parent to child
- Using child to bargain with other parent
- Neglecting child on visits

Denying Impact of Abuse on Child: *Decisions or behaviors that fail to acknowledge and repair the damage resulting from one's own abuse*

Examples:

- Failing to acknowledge damage from abuse
- Demanding respect in the face of abuse
- Refusing to seek counseling for abuse
- Interfering with other parent's treatment efforts
- Failing to acknowledge child's needs
- Failing to respond to child's needs
- Disregarding child's needs
- Interfering with other parent's care of child

- Interfering with child's counseling/healthcare
- Refusing to apologize for abuse
- Justifying abuse
- Forcing unwanted engagement with child
- Being intolerant of criticism for abuse
- Blaming others for abuse

Ignoring Child's Separate Needs: *Beliefs that the child's interests, needs and perceptions are either: (1) indistinguishable from the other parent's interests, needs and perceptions; or (2) attributable to the other parent*

Examples

- Elevating one's own needs above the child's needs
- Believing one's own needs and child's need are identical
- Believing that oneself and one's child think and feel the same way
- Believing that one knows exclusively what is best for the child
- Believing that one's own pain is mirrored in the child
- Obsessive attachment to the child
- Seeing no value in the child's contact with the other parent,
- Believing that child's mind is being poisoned by the other parent
- Believing that the child is mirroring the other parent
- Believing that the other parent and the child are conspiring

Undermining the Other's Parenting or Relationship with Child: *Decisions or behaviors that either: (1) interfere with the other parent's ability to parent or exercise parental authority; or (2) disrupt or harm the child's relationship with the other parent,*

Examples

- Refusing to enforce established rules
- Refusing to agree to rules or structure
- Violating established parenting agreements
- Making false allegations to authorities
- Withholding information concerning the child
- Under- or over-medicating child
- Disrupting child's schedule or routine
- Using new partner to replace other parent
- Sharing too much information with child
- Disparaging other parent in front of child
- Disrespecting other parent's new partner
- Criticizing other parent

Relentless Harassment: *Decisions or behaviors that disrupt the everyday life of, and create persistent instability, insecurity or unpredictability for the child and/or the other parent (usually under the guise of some seemingly legitimate principle like safety, equality, fairness, duty, or parental concern),*

Examples

- Constantly disrupting the child's schedule/routines
- Interfering with their school, sleep or social life
- Interfering with the other parent's work
- Engaging in harassing litigation
- Interfering with health care
- Making false reports to authorities

- Disparaging other parent to family/friends
- Fluctuating parental involvement
- Constantly changing rules or expectations
- Monitoring other parent's whereabouts
- Stalking other parent or child
- Making unreasonable demands on time
- Cancelling or rescheduling appointments
- Making oneself look good in harmful ways
- Hacking into other parent's computer
- Disrupting other parent's transportation
- Cutting off phone service
- Setting off home alarm system
- Constantly raising "technical arguments"
- Showing up unannounced
- Missing visits and appointments
- Sabotaging other parent at every turn