

Risk Factors for Child Abuse and Neglect

(From HelpGuide.org)



- **Domestic violence.** Witnessing domestic violence is terrifying to children and emotionally abusive. Even if the mother does her best to protect her children and keeps them from being physically abused, the situation is still extremely damaging. If you or a loved one is in an abusive relationships, getting out is the best thing for protecting the children.
- **Alcohol and drug abuse.** Living with an alcoholic or addict is very difficult for children and can easily lead to abuse and neglect. Parents who are drunk or high are unable to care for their children, make good parenting decisions, and control often-dangerous impulses. Substance abuse also commonly leads to physical abuse. Also children's basic needs can be unmet to the point of causing harmful consequences and sometimes neglect.
- **Untreated mental illness.** Parents who suffering from depression, an anxiety disorder, bipolar disorder, or another mental illness have trouble taking care of themselves, much less their children. A mentally ill or traumatized parent may be distant and withdrawn from his or her children, or quick to anger without understanding why. Treatment for the caregiver means better care for the children.
- **Lack of parenting skills.** Some caregivers never learned the skills necessary for good parenting. Teen parents, for example, might have unrealistic expectations about how much care babies and small children need. Or parents who were themselves victims of child abuse may only know how to raise their children the way they were raised. Also, a parent's new partner in the household may have had little or no preparation for parenting. In such cases, parenting classes, therapy, and caregiver support groups are great resources for learning better parenting skills.
- **Stress and lack of support.** Parenting can be a very time-intensive, difficult job, especially if a parent or care taker is raising children without support from family, friends, or the community or is dealing with relationship problems or financial difficulties. Caring for a child with a disability, special needs, or difficult behaviors is also a challenge. It's important for parents to get the support they need, so they are emotionally and physically able to support their child.

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