THE EFFECTS OF VIOLENCE ON CHILDREN

BEHAVIORS
* Acting out
* Overachieving (constantly working hard) or underachieving (giving up)
* Refusing to go to school (school phobia)
* Care-taking (filling parent roles)
* Learn to manipulate because of their own safety issues
* Aggressive (bullying)
* Nightmares
* Difficulty with limit setting
* Constantly seeking attention
* Whiny, clingy behaviors
* Crave/demand attention and nurturing
* Nervous and anxious
* Passive/withdrawn
* Rigid defenses
* Aloof
* Sarcastic
* Short
* span

PHYSICAL
* Somatic complaints: stomach aches, regression to earlier stages of development: thumb sucking, bed-wetting, baby-talk, etc.
* Often sick with colics, flu, etc.
* No reaction sometimes to physical pain
* Tired and lethargic (seems lazy)
* May be indifferent to self care or personal hygiene
* Caught in the crossfire and may get hurt
* Physically abused
* Possibly killed

MENTAL
* Feeling alone
* Shame
* Guilt
* Confusion
* Fear
* Being told they can’t do anything right
* Burdened
* Fear of doing wrong
* Fear of expressing feelings
* Nervous and anxious
* Depressed/feel helpless

EMOTIONAL
* Need for a safe and secure environment
* Loss and grief (if one parent has to go to a shelter or leave their home, etc.)
* Stressed and tense – constantly waiting for a blow-up
* Feel betrayed by those they love the most
* Anger (When they’re younger, anger at the abuser, as they get older, especially boys, may be angry with the victim)

ISOLATION
* Believing theirs is the only home where violence is occurring
* Feeling alone, different and afraid to talk to anyone about what’s happening in their home
* Afraid and embarrassed to have friends over because of the violence in the home
* Inability to trust adults (which adds to feelings of isolation)
* Development of poor social skills
* May miss a lot school
* Not allowed to be social, go places, visit friends

SOCIAL
* Isolated (no friends)
* Overly socially involved (staying away from home as much as possible)
* Difficulty trusting others
* Relationships with playmates may start with great intensity and end abruptly
* Poor conflict resolution skills
* Lean inappropriate boundaries
* Unwilling to share or compromise
* May be passive (a rug) or bullying (power and control)

Sexual Abuse and Sexual Stereotyping
* Shame about body
* Learn inappropriate sexual talk and behavior
* May be exposed to sexual activity or pornography
* Taught to devalue women
* Threatened to keep the “family secret”
* Threatened harm to mom or other family members

THREATS AND INTIMIDATION
* Putting children in fear by using looks, loud actions, loud voices, smashing things, throwing things
* Killing or harming family pets
* Destroying property or favorite toys, etc.
* Threatened to keep the “family secret”
* Threatened harm to mom or other family members

The above lists are not all inclusive. When assessing the effects of violence on children, look for extremes in behavior, and in situations. Information has been compiled from various sources by the Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women, 1999.