

“Piccole vittime da proteggere. Identificare e affrontare le conseguenze della vittimizzazione dei bambini esposti alla violenza domestica”

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Gender violence, that of men against women, is a phenomenon which, in Italy and the world, still pervades every corner of our societies, from the workplace to the sensational events reported in news headlines. In the majority of cases the woman-mother bears the abuse for the sake of her children and to defend the unity of a patriarchal family model. Concealing the violence prevails for socio-cultural reasons, yet once it reaches the children, the mother breaks the code of silence and comes out into the open. From the testimony of the woman who discloses, emerges the indirect damage incurred by the child, shaped by a complex psychological and social reaction. Childhood identity is radically changed by this profound violation, causing recurrent states of exclusion and processes of victimization.

The memory of the violence suffered is the secret which unites mother and child, a connection which will always be bound in suffering, humiliation and pain. The woman experiences ambivalence, torn between seeking help from socio-educational services and the hope that her children might one day forget. However the damage inflicted to childhood, in the first 15 years of life, is devastating, so much so as to induce self-harm, bullying, dropping out of school, and negating the desire to be in a relationship and start a family for fear of repeating the behaviours witnessed.

Faced with such a situation, it is important that the key people around the child, teachers and educators, social workers, counsellors and parents, offer an alternative to the violence witnessed. They can show the child how to manage the damage caused, once its existence and extent is understood. This book represents an answer developed as a result of the European Daphne III research (2009-2011) which took place simultaneously in Italy, Cyprus, Rumania and Slovakia, on the victimization of mother and child when exposed to domestic violence. The three manuals are complementary, and for the first time published together in a single volume. They are useful instruments to guide actions which contrast violence, to activate and engage in behaviours which will lessen the damage inflicted on the young victims, and to support girls and boys in leaving the trauma behind them and to re-instill a sense of trust in themselves and in others. Despite the devastating experience of violence, it is possible to rebuild a life plan which looks toward the future in a positive way and which promotes children growing up by fully participating in a society based on respect and dignity of the human being.

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