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THE ISSUE

Did you grow up in a home living with domestic violence?

WHAT IS CDV?
Childhood Domestic Violence or CDV is when you grow up living with domestic violence – which includes yelling, threatening, hurtful words, putting each other down, etc.

HOW IS CDV DIFFERENT FROM DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND CHILD ABUSE?
Domestic violence is when one adult at home tries to control the actions of another adult by using hurtful words, yelling, threatening, putting the other adult down, or hurting them physically. This is what happens between the ADULTS. Child abuse is any act of verbal, sexual, or physical harm to a child by a parent or caretaker. Childhood Domestic Violence is different from domestic violence, because it concerns the CHILD in that home and THEIR experience with the violence, not the experience of the adults. It is also different from child abuse, because the violence happening in the home might not be directed towards the child – they may just be seeing it, hearing it, “witnessing” it around them. But it will still have an impact on them that is just as serious as if they are the direct target of the abuse.

HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE AFFECTED?
According to one of the best known children’s organizations in the world – UNICEF – CDV is “one of the most pervasive human rights challenges of our time.” Roughly 1 billion people are impacted by it worldwide. In the U.S. alone, an estimated 40+ million adults grew up with it as children and 15+ million children are impacted by it.

WHAT IS THE IMPACT?
Growing up with domestic violence negatively wires a developing brain and the formation of the cognitive belief system. It encodes a series of negative beliefs – LIES – that a child grows up to believe about themselves. They may believe they’re GUILTY, RESENTFUL, SAD, ALONE, ANGRY, HOPELESS, WORTHLESS, FEARFUL, SELF-CONSCIOUS, and UNLOVED. If unchallenged early on, these LIES can last well into adulthood, often causing those impacted to struggle in one or all four key areas of their life: physical health, mental health, behavior, and relationships. This may prevent them from reaching their full potential or living the life meant for them. Those who grow up with CDV are also 6x more likely to commit suicide, 50% more likely to abuse drugs or alcohol, and 74% more likely to commit a violent crime. They are also at a high risk for repeat the domestic violence as adults, because the SINGLE BEST PREDICTOR of becoming either a perpetrator or victim of domestic violence later in life is whether or not one grows up living with it.

HOW TO HELP PEOPLE CHANGE
According to experts, the first steps towards change are AWARENESS, UNDERSTANDING, and SHARING. For every LIE, there is a transformative TRUTH, and by replacing the LIES with the TRUTHS, they can unlearn what was learned in childhood and begin to overcome the impact. A key step towards healing is being able to share their story. According to research, talking about it is one of the most effective ways to overcome the effects. Conversation helps them gain a new perspective, transform the meaning, and get on a path to reaching their full potential. The TRUTH is that no obstacle they will ever face can compare to what they went through in childhood and have already conquered. But they do not realize that...unless someone steps in and tells them. That cannot happen without conversation.
THE NICK NEWS SEGMENT

SYNOPSIS
The Nick News With Linda Ellerbee special – “Family Secrets: When Violence Hits Home” – is an Emmy-nominated children’s program that chronicles the stories of children who grew up living with domestic violence and how they were able to begin to overcome the impact of this childhood experience.

The segment features interviews with several children impacted by CDV, including Chelsea, Elijah, and Emily Waldroup – three of the children featured in our award-winning documentary film, THE CHILDREN NEXT DOOR.

The 22-minute Nick News segment first aired in August 2013, reaching nearly 1.2 million young people who watch the program regularly. This groundbreaking special marked a milestone in the movement against CDV, as it was the first ever television special produced for young people on this topic to air on a national television network. It can help millions realize what some of the children featured in the segment have already discovered: that “because of what I went through, there is nothing I can’t do.”

CREATING THE SEGMENT
The Childhood Domestic Violence Association worked with Nick News to help them communicate directly with young people who are either growing up with domestic violence or know someone who is.

The Association was instrumental in the production of this segment, with the spark ignited at a screening of our award-winning documentary, THE CHILDREN NEXT DOOR, at a film festival. We shared with Nickelodeon the magnitude of the problem, the impact, and the shockingly low level of awareness (currently less than 15%). We also shared with them what we believed to be the solutions: awareness, understanding, and sharing.

Nickelodeon cited the Association as the resource children should turn to if they’re living with domestic violence and don’t know where to go for help.

“Family Secrets: When Violence Hits Home” was later honored with an Emmy nomination for Outstanding Children’s Program in 2014.

MILESTONES THE SEGMENT ACCOMPLISHED
1. BUILT AWARENESS: By highlighting the issue, Nick News sent a powerful message to all viewers impacted by CDV that they are NOT alone and that it is NOT their fault. The Emmy nomination provided further social proof and validation that CDV is a critical social issue, which will help build much needed awareness. Increased awareness, understanding, and sharing will lead to more and more people learning the TRUTHS and reaching their full potential.

2. REVEALED THE TRUTHS: Key TRUTHS concerning CDV were revealed through the segment, and this is a key step in fostering resiliency in children who’re impacted. The path to reaching their full potential after experiencing CDV involves unlearning the LIES learned in childhood and embracing the transformative TRUTHS. This special highlighted these messages and demonstrated to young viewers that sharing is key, because as they share, caring adults will appear who can help them unlearn what was learned and learn anew, which will lead then down a path to achieve the life they hope for.
3. **PROVIDED ROLE MODELS:** The children featured in the episode are not only role models with respect to sharing, but also role models of what’s possible, beyond CDV: symbols of hope for any young viewer who is growing up living with domestic violence today.

**THE ORGANIZATION**

The Childhood Domestic Violence Association ([cdv.org](http://cdv.org)) is leading the way the world understands and treats Childhood Domestic Violence (CDV). Our mission is to increase awareness of CDV as an issue affecting hundreds of millions, to empower caring adults, communities and organizations to serve as a lifeline for impacted children, and to educate adults who experienced CDV as to the long-term impact, so they can strive to overcome.

Using the leading research and best known practices in the field, we develop and deploy scalable tools that have never existed before. We partner with leading organizations that directly touch the lives of children and adults who are growing up/grew up living with domestic violence. Our tools and resources are then used to educate, train, and empower them to reclaim their lives and reach their full potential.

Over the past 7 years, the Association has developed several groundbreaking resources, each using a different method and medium to build awareness and educate different constituents about CDV – from those impacted to anyone who cares about, works with, or mentors someone who is/was, to the general public. They were all recently packaged into a single box – the **CDV TOOLKIT** – which includes this Nick News DVD, “Family Secrets: When Violence Hits Home.”

*For more information about the Association’s work and resources, visit [www.cdv.org](http://www.cdv.org)*
BEFORE THE SCREENING

IMPORTANT THEMES TO LOOK FOR IN THE SEGMENT

- **CDV CAN HAPPEN TO ANYONE:** This is an issue that can impact anyone: all races, financial situations, locations, and family compositions.

- **IT HAS A VERY SIMILAR IMPACT TO PHYSICAL CHILD ABUSE:** Although many of the children who grow up living with domestic violence are not the direct target of the abuse themselves, seeing the violence unfold can be just as damaging as physical child abuse.

- **THEIR BASIC NEEDS ARE NOT MET:** These children do not feel safe and secure at home. They feel helpless to defend the parent being abused and guilty and worthless for not being able to stop it. Older siblings, like Chelsea, also often feel the need to protect their younger siblings. Only children, such as Sophia, can feel exceptionally alone. And most feel unloved by the people who are most important to them at that young age.

- **THEY BELIEVE THE VIOLENCE IS NORMAL:** Often, these children know nothing else: the violence in their home is normal to them. When they realize their family situation is NOT normal – that this violence is NOT okay – they feel a deep loss, a sense of being robbed of their childhood.

- **IT IS A WELL-KEPT SECRET:** Children find many reasons to keep their home situation a secret, including:
  - Fear that it’ll get worse or that they’ll get hurt
  - Feeling of being completely alone, trapped, with no one to turn to
  - Fear of being taken away from their family
  - Fear of getting their parent in trouble
  - Financial dependence
  - Fear that even if they leave, the abuser will find them again
  - Belief that it is a private family matter and not something to share with others
  - Inability to put into words what exactly they’re experiencing

- **IT IS NEVER A CHILD’S FAULT OR RESPONSIBILITY:** Children often feel there’re things they can and should do to make things better or to stop the violence. But, in reality, it is NEVER a child’s fault or job to control the actions of an adult.

- **CDV HAS A PROFOUND & LASTING IMPACT:** Even after leaving the home, the feelings and LIES of CDV can haunt them and continue to impact their lives indefinitely.

- **AWARENESS, UNDERSTANDING, & SHARING ARE CURATIVE:** The children’s situations begin to change when they speak up or seek help, demonstrating that SHARING, spreading AWARENESS and building UNDERSTANDING are key for healing and can also help others as well.

- **THEY ARE ROLE MODELS:** Talking about it helps the children in the segment begin to heal and reclaim their lives. They’re role models for others and symbols of hope that things CAN change and there IS a better future awaiting those impacted by CDV.

- **THEY HAVE AN UNCOMMON STRENGTH OTHERS DO NOT:** Because of all they had to face and overcome on a daily basis at such a young age, these children have an uncommon strength that makes
them uniquely capable of facing and overcoming challenges in life. They are stronger than they know, for what could compare to what they have already faced and overcome? They are invincible.

- **THEY CAN CONTROL THEIR LIFE & FUTURE**: They can't change the past, but they can define and reshape their future. They can choose a different path when they become adults and make their future homes very different than their childhood homes. They can unlearn what was learned in those homes and go on to lead successful lives as many former children of domestic violence have done before.
IMPORTANT QUOTES FROM FAMILY SECRETS

HOW THEY FELT

“I would feel scared. I would hear banging on the walls and would hide under my covers.”

“I felt like if I did more, they would argue less. But he was unpleasable.”

“When my parents would fight, to me that was normal because I didn’t know what a normal parent was at the time.”

“As a kid, you feel hopeless, because the two people you love are arguing and fighting.”

“I was angry about what happened, like I was wondering ‘why did this have to happen to my family?’ ”

“I felt like I had failed when my dad went to jail. I felt like if I had done more, maybe they wouldn’t have argued as much – maybe it wouldn’t have escalated to that.”

“The way he was acting wasn’t hurting me emotionally, but my mother being hurt was hurting me emotionally because she was all that I had.”

“I was scared that eventually he was going to kill her, because it was getting really extreme.”

“When he was abusing her, I’d try to distract myself by watching television or reading, but I never wanted to leave the room, because I was always afraid he would take it to the next level and harm her more.”

“I would try defending her and trying to find ways to get him off of her. But I don't think that's the best way for a child to deal with this situation, because the abuser doesn't have self-control over their anger and the child could get hurt as well.”

“I've never been loved by him.”

“I’m an only child, so I was basically hiding by myself, and I felt so alone.”

“They’d yell, ‘I never want to see you again, I regret meeting you,’ which made me feel even worse, because if they hadn't met, they would've never had me.”

“I felt very unsafe. Sometimes, I would sleep in the closet. The closet was my hiding place.”

“I thought, ‘do they love me? Or do they not love me THAT much to stop? To know that I was hurting? And as parents, they should know that I was hurting.’ ”

LINGERING PAIN & FEAR AFTER ESCAPING THE VIOLENCE

“We all felt safer since he’s gone, but living in the same house…it still brought back memories.”

“You can change from a house with violence to a shelter where it’s safe, but you can’t change the feelings that you still have from that. All the violence was done, but I couldn’t get the thoughts out of my head.”

“Today...I know I’m safe, but the past is still haunting me.”

“When me, my mother, and my brother moved into our own apartment, I began to worry that he would find us there, and that was a big worry of mine for a really long time.”

“I still want to know answers, and I still want to know why. A part of me wants to blame him, and another part of me wants to forgive him, but it's so hard.”

WHY THEY KEPT IT A SECRET

“I felt like we had to keep it hidden. We knew it was wrong, we knew the violence was something that my dad could get in trouble for, so we just chose not to tell, because we loved him. I mean, it was our dad.”
“I really wanted to leave, but I never talked to my mom about what was going on. I didn’t know how she felt, and I didn’t know if she wanted to leave like I did.”

“There would be times when he would say that if we’d left, he’d find us and he’d hurt us…”

“I wanted to help my mom. I wanted to tell someone that she needs help, she needs to get out, get out of this. But, I had nobody to tell…I felt like I was in prison – that I was in a cage. I felt like I was the only person in this world who had this, so I had nobody to tell about my feelings.”

“I just thought maybe it was a family thing that I needed to keep a secret.”

“It got so bad one time I went to the school counselor. But they didn’t really help, because I didn’t really tell her what was going on, because I felt like if I said they were getting physical, then they’d take me away.”

THE START TO FINDING PEACE

“After the first week of being at that shelter, I started to realize that it did end, that he wasn’t there anymore, and there was no more hitting.”

“Now that my family is living on our own and we have our own house, it’s like I’m starting my childhood now.”

“I know I can never have that perfect family that I wanted, but I can try to make my own happy family.”

“I can’t change my past, I can’t change how my parents chose to live, but I can change how I decide to live and how my life is going to be.”

TALKING ABOUT IT HELPS TRANSFORM THE MEANING

“Things changed for me when I started talking about it to a friend. She was my neighbor, so whenever they started fighting, I’d just go to her house and I talked about my situation to her.”

“As we got to talking [with other women and children who experienced domestic violence], we realized speaking about your situation not only helps others, but it helps yourself.”

“Now that I’ve talked to a lot of people about it, it’s helped me accept it a lot.”

“I’m part of a group called Peace, which stands for Peer Encouragement and Community Education, and we go around at different events and tell people about domestic violence and what they can look out for. When I go out in the community and tell people about domestic violence, I’m telling them about my story and I know it’s a good thing.”

DISCOVERING THE TRUTH – HIDDEN GIFTS EARNED IN EXCHANGE FOR THE PRICE PAID

“I can’t change my past, I can’t change how my parents chose to live, but I can change how I decide to live and how my life is going to be.”

“I was a witness of domestic violence, but after that I witnessed my mother grow and become stronger. So now I know that if I’m put in a difficult situation, that I can grow and become stronger as well.”

“Sometimes I think about it and I’m like: ‘Why...how did I live like this? How did my mom even live?’ But I’ve learned to be brave and to be strong and to not be afraid of anybody.”

“Because of what I went through, there’s nothing I can’t do now. I have already faced so much fear in my life – everything else seems so small in comparison.”
TALKING TO CHILDREN ABOUT CDV

IMPLEMENTING A GROUP DISCUSSION & SCREENING
At times, opportunities may arise to speak with an impacted child one-on-one. But often, the easiest way to introduce Childhood Domestic Violence (CDV) to children is in a group setting – by introducing and discussing the topic as an issue that a number of children face across the globe – and then screening the DVD.

During this, make sure to acknowledge each response and validate their feelings. Listen carefully and reassure them there’s no “wrong” answer. Encourage them to fully express their thoughts and feelings, and let them know they can come to you directly for a safe, private conversation, if they need to.

KEY STEPS TO CONSIDER

1) Ask the Group to Define Domestic Violence: What comes to mind when you hear “domestic violence”?

2) Define Domestic Violence: Domestic violence is when one adult in a house tries to control the actions of the other adult in the house by yelling, bullying, or hurting them.

3) Ask the Group to Generate Ideas About What Childhood Domestic Violence Might Be: What comes to mind when you hear “Childhood Domestic Violence?”

4) Define Childhood Domestic Violence: Childhood Domestic Violence (CDV) is when you grow up living in a home with violence between your parents or towards a parent – perhaps from a stepparent or significant other. The violence can be physical or non-physical – for example, yelling, threatening, hurtful words, putting each other down, etc. – or both. And the violence is NOT directed towards you, the child.

5) Ask the Group to Generate a List About Feelings: Think about what it might feel like to grow up living with domestic violence.

6) Introduce the Feelings Commonly Associated with CDV: Let’s talk particularly about the following feelings:
   a. GUILTY, because it was your fault – you should have stopped it.
   b. RESENTFUL, bitter, having no true compassion for another.
   c. SAD, hurt, constantly feeling a sense of loss.
   d. ALONE, truly not connected to others.
   e. ANGRY, prone to violence and in a constant state of frustration.
   f. HOPELESS, because life has no purpose and nothing works out.
   g. WORTHLESS, unimportant, not good enough, a failure.
   h. FEARFUL, uncertain, timid, lacking true confidence inside.
   i. SELF-CONSCIOUS, unattractive, never being truly good enough for anyone.
   j. UNLOVED, not able to really love or be loved.

7) Screen The “Family Secrets: When Violence Hits Home” DVD for the Group: Have the group watch the Nick News DVD and write down some stories, comments, and feelings shared by the featured children, to help reinforce the lists you’ve already generated.

8) Ask the Group to Generate a List About Impact on Behavior or Attitude: How might living in a home like this impact one’s daily activities, like schoolwork, hobbies, trying new things, or friendships with other people? How might it impact their behavior? Might they lose interest in hobbies and activities, do poorly in school, mistrust others, keep a distance? Might they act out to get attention, bully others, or “overreact” easily? Or might they
appear completely “normal” and well-adjusted? What are some others ways they might behave?

9) Reveal the Facts About How Childhood Domestic Violence Impacts a Child’s Behavior: Based on science, we tend to act according to how we feel and what we believe about ourselves. So, when children grow up feeling guilty, resentful, sad, alone, angry and believing they are hopeless, worthless, unattractive, or unloved, these feelings and beliefs lead them to act in certain ways. They might include:

- Losing interest in hobbies and activities
- Having a hard time trusting others
- Keeping a distance from other people in your life
- Acting out as a way to get attention
- Bullying other children
- “Overreacting” easily
- Emotionally withdrawing or being distant
- Struggling with fear, anxiety, or depression
- Feeling intense separation anxiety when separated from people you love, even temporarily
- Having low self-esteem
- Expressing frequent physical and health complaints
- Not eating regularly
- Having trouble sleeping or having frequent nightmares
- Being distracted, struggling with concentrating and learning
- Doing poorly in school because you have a hard time concentrating

It’s also important to know that some children don’t show ANY “signs” of something being wrong. In fact, some may be A-students who are outgoing, well liked by their peers and involved in many school and extracurricular activities. These children are particularly difficult to identify as living in households with domestic violence, because there are no “problem behaviors” – quite the opposite.

10) Explain the Long-Term Effects on Children Who Are Impacted: Some effects are as follows:

- They are 6x more likely to commit suicide, 50% more likely to abuse drugs or alcohol, and 74% more likely to commit a violent crime against someone else.
- The leading global children’s organization, UNICEF, says that growing up with domestic violence is the leading cause of whether or not you will be involved in domestic violence later in life as an adult.

11) Share Key Messages: (These messages are captured in the KEY MESSAGES section below.) If any child is living in a home like this, they must know some simple TRUTHS.
KEY MESSAGES (TRUTHS) TO SHARE WITH CHILDREN

Below are some simple messages that, for a child impacted by CDV, can begin to cause a significant positive shift in their self-concept and cognitive belief system:

- If you’re experiencing CDV, is NOT okay.
- It’s scary and confusing to live in a home like this.
- No child ever deserves to have this happen in their home or in their family.
- I’m sorry if you have to face/see/hear this in your home.
- Your feelings are important.
- I care about you. I’m here to listen if you ever need to talk.
- I hear you. I believe you.
- It is NOT your fault and you didn’t do anything to cause it.
- It’s not your job to stop it – it is NEVER a child’s job to control the actions of adults.
- There is nothing you could have done to prevent/change it.
- You are NOT ALONE. Many, many other children are going through the same thing right now, and many adults also went through it when they were children. 1 in 7 people experience CDV. You probably know other people who are going through the same exact thing right now...but you may not know it that.
- This experience does not define you or your life.
- You can’t control what is happening in your home, but you will be able to control what happens in your home when you get older. You can choose a different path.
- If you’re able to get through this every day, what else can you not get through in life? What fear could compare to what you’ve already faced and conquered? You’re INVINCIBLE.
- Because of that, you have a special strength inside that can help you overcome any challenges you face in life.
- We can talk about what to do to keep you safe, if it happens again. (For example, staying in your room, picking a safe place to hide, going to the neighbors’, or calling 911).
- If you want me to get help for you to make it stop, we can talk about that also.
- Sharing your experience is so important. If you can talk about it with someone you trust, that will make a big difference. Others can offer support – you don’t have to carry this burden alone – and others also see things differently and might share something with you that you aren’t able to see for yourself.
- If you don’t want to share with someone else, share with yourself – maybe keep a journal and write your thoughts and feelings down whenever you can, then go back later and reread what you wrote and think about it.

Consider sharing these additional messages with older children (adolescents and teens):

- You’re facing and overcoming obstacles every day that other children do not. So, when you face challenges as you get older, you can draw strength from this by remembering that you were able to get through this. So what else can you not get through in life?
- You may be feeling a lot of negative feelings now because of what’s happening in your home. [Give them an opportunity to express their feelings and acknowledge them]. You may be feeling GUILTFUL, RESENTFUL, SAD, ALONE, ANGRY, HOPELESS, WORTHLESS, FEARFUL, SELF-CONSCIOUS, or UNLOVED. These feelings are LIES – negative beliefs that children learn when they grow up living in homes like yours. But these are not TRUE – they are not who you really are. The TRUTH is that:
- You’re not GUILTY – you’re FREE, because you will not be in that home forever. You’ll leave when you’re old enough and you can create a completely different home for yourself.

- You’re not SAD – you’re GRATEFUL, because when you leave, you’ll see a whole other world out there that offers you an opportunity for unlimited potential to achieve all that you want in life.

- You’re not RESENTFUL – you’re COMPASSIONATE, because you know what real pain and suffering feels like, so you have a unique ability to sympathize with others.

- You’re not ALONE – you can be TRUSTING, because there are so many others who’ve experienced the same thing as you, and you will realize that there’re also many others who understand, have compassion, care, and can be trusted.

- You don’t have to be ANGRY – you can be PASSIONATE by using the energy from anger, which is very strong energy, and channeling it into the things you really care about or want in life.

- You’re not WORTHLESS – you’re ACCOMPLISHED, because just by being able to live through and overcome what you’ve already overcome, you’ve already accomplished more than most people.

- Everything is not HOPELESS – you’re actually GUIDED to create a better home and life for yourself after you leave this home, by making the right choices.

- You don’t have to be FEARFUL – what you’ve already survived in your home should inspire you with CONFIDENCE that you’re prepared to face and overcome any challenge you face later in life.

- You don’t have to be SELF-CONSCIOUS – there’s nothing wrong with you, and what is happening in your home isn’t about you. When you begin to believe that, you will begin to see yourself in a different light and realize how ATTRACTIVE you truly are – inside and out.

- You’re not UNLOVED – because it takes so little for those of us who grew up in these homes to feel loved and we realize how important it is because we don’t feel it often, we can offer it to others by being LOVING. When we show care towards others, that in turn makes others love us back.

- Some very successful people, like former President Bill Clinton, Halle Berry, Christina Aguilera, Curtis Martin, Patrick Stewart, senators, political leaders, successful business people, and many other high-profile individuals went through what you’re going through when they were children. When they grew up, they chose not to use violence. Instead, they chose to channel the energy from the negative feelings into their passions (the things they’re really good at) and focus their strengths on achieving their goals. They went on to live highly successful lives and help others as well.

- You can do the same – anyone who grew up living with domestic violence has these choices, and because of what you experienced, you have a special strength inside of you to make the right choices.

- Sharing your experience is so important. Talk to someone you can trust about what you’re experiencing, so they can offer you support. You don’t have to deal with this alone, and they may share a different perspective or insight you may be unable to see for yourself. This can help you control the meaning of your experience.
POST-SCREENING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Here are some additional questions you might consider posing to young people for discussion AFTER screening the Nick News special, “Family Secrets: When Violence Hits Home”:

- **What did you learn about Childhood Domestic Violence (CDV) from watching this special?**
- **What scenes or stories stood out to you the most?**
- **What are some of the feelings children in the special shared struck you?**
- **What were some of the reasons the children kept it a secret at first?**
- **What are some things that helped these children feel better and more hopeful?**
- **Did talking about it and sharing their stories change their situations for the better or for the worse?**
- **After the children get away from the violence, do all of the negative feelings go away? Why or why not?**
- **What can be done to help children feel more comfortable talking about it when they’re hiding this secret?**
- **What would you say to a friend who might be experiencing CDV at home?**
DIRECTLY SUPPORTING A CHILD EXPERIENCING CDV
(Print and pass out to ADULTS who work with or mentor vulnerable children)

THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF A CARING ADULT – “THE ONE”
The turning point in many of these children’s lives, as shown in the Nick News special, “Family Secrets: When Violence Hits Home,” is when a trusted adult – THE ONE - steps in and they are finally able to open up to that adult about their situation. When you approach children as a safe and caring adult, offering them the opportunity to talk, they can feel safe, cared for, understood, and encouraged to talk about what is happening at home. You can help them unlearn the LIES of CDV and introduce them to the TRUTHS they may not be able to see for themselves, in some very simple ways. You can help change their life.

THE CHANGE A LIFE PROGRAM

OVERVIEW
The groundbreaking CHANGE A LIFE program, developed by leading researcher in the world and endorsed by the U.S. Fund for UNICEF and Children’s Mercy Hospitals, is the first of its kind. It is designed to train any caring adult to be a protective factor in the life of a child growing up with domestic violence. By taking some simple actions and sharing some key messages, you can lead a child to see the TRUTH they may otherwise be unable to see for themselves and help change their life.

CHANGE A LIFE is a simple, free, interactive, cutting-edge, self-administered 40-minute online program that prepares, empowers, and guides any caring adult – THE ONE – to step into the life of a child experiencing domestic violence with simple support and messages of hope that can help change their life. The program was built using the best and most promising practices in working with those impacted, with feedback from leading national organizations committed to the well-being of children, plus contributions from multiple experts in the field. There is no other program like it in the world today.

This evidence-based program was recently tested in a 2-year randomized university study and findings of its efficacy were published in the Journal of Family Violence.

In addition, the award-winning documentary, THE CHILDREN NEXT DOOR, sponsored and produced by the Childhood Domestic Violence Association, is an organic case study of the CHANGE A LIFE program in action. It captures how a caring adult steps into the lives of the Waldroup children – as is the leading premise of the program – to help them unlearn what was learned growing up in a home with domestic violence and discover the TRUTH.

Find out more and take the program at www.cdv.org/tools-and-resources/the-change-a-life-program.

KEY STEPS ANY CARING ADULT SHOULD KNOW
As you will learn in the CHANGE A LIFE program, there are some simple steps you can follow to support a child who is experiencing domestic violence at home. Here are some of the key ones:

- **Talk:** It’s important to relate to children and teens in a natural way by finding commonalities and allowing relationships to happen naturally. You should approach them casually, without forcing the issue, by getting them to talk about their feelings and thoughts in general. Rather than asking them directly about the violence that may be happening or their feelings around it, you might try instead to bring up more general discussion about the way they think and feel about life and other experiences.
This helps them identify emotions they may be feeling and express thoughts that weigh on them. An effective way to get children or teens talking about their thoughts and feelings is to use books, movies, activities, or things you may have in common as a starting point.

- **Listen**: Every child’s and teen’s experience with CDV is unique. If the child or teen does open up to you about the violence they’re facing, allow them to share their own story without trying to correct or shape their perception of the violence. Instead, listen attentively and acknowledge their story and feelings. Phrases such as “That must have been scary,” “I’m sorry this is happening to you,” or “What can I do to help you?” may be helpful when listening to a young person talking about the violence in their home.

- **Respect**: Children and teens who experience CDV often have little power or control over their lives and any attempt they make to express themselves or their feelings may be met with violence or dismissal in the household. Showing them respect by giving them some decision-making opportunities and asking for/respecting their opinions gives them a chance to have some power and control in their lives, as well as feel valued.

- **Offer Safety**: Brainstorm and rehearse with the child or teen ways they can stay safe. You can talk to them about a safe place to go when the violence happens, help them identify safe adults to talk to, and brainstorm with them when it might be appropriate to call 911. It’s also important to discuss with children and teens what happens if the safety plan doesn’t work – perhaps a plan B. And finally, it’s essential to let them know that no matter what happens, it isn’t their fault or their job to stop it, so that they don’t feel guilty about not being able to prevent the violence. They must understand their sole job is to stay safe.

- **Inspire Hope**: As caring adults, we can use our words and actions to help children learn positive coping skills and inspire hope in their lives. Helping children and teens think and reflect on their negative experience in a positive way may help reshape their understanding of it and change the way they see themselves and others. Explaining to the child or teen that the rest of their life does not need to be defined by the violence they’re facing at home now is key. Helping them realize that there’re other ways of living and that many children who experience domestic violence grow up to live very healthy and happy lives is essential.

- **Acknowledge Their Strengths and Highlight Their Positive Qualities**: Experiencing negative events may bring out inner strengths and lead to positive growth for some children. Children and teens have different strengths that foster their ability to succeed. Examples of these might include academic or athletic achievements, sense of humor, kind and caring personality. Highlighting a child or teen’s positive qualities may boost their self-esteem and let them know they do have qualities others see and appreciate, which is likely the opposite of the messages they’re receiving at home.

*For a full list of the simple but essential messages you can share with children impacted by CDV, please refer to the [KEY MESSAGES section above](#).*

*To learn more about supporting a child impacted by CDV, take CHANGE A LIFE at [changealife.cdv.org](http://changealife.cdv.org)*
ARE YOU A CHILD OR TEEN EXPERIENCING CDV?
(Print and pass out to OLDER CHILDREN/TEENS attending the Nick News discussion and screening)

Is there a lot of screaming and fighting in your house? Yes? You probably feel scared, sad, and helpless a lot. Maybe you stay awake at night waiting for the fighting to start and fearing how bad it will get.

You might think it is your fault or it is happening because of something you did. Or maybe you think you should be able to do something to stop it? You may have even tried, but it didn’t work. That probably made you feel guilty, not good enough, or ashamed because you couldn’t stop it. Maybe you feel completely hopeless – like giving up on everything – because there’s just no point.

Even though this may be happening often, you may not have told anyone. Maybe you’re embarrassed to tell. Or maybe you’re afraid that if you tell, things will get even worse. So, you’re keeping this a secret and you face it all alone, night after night.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW / WHAT YOU CAN DO

1. **TALK ABOUT IT:** You should tell someone what is happening at home.
   There are probably adults you know who care about you and want to help. Maybe an aunt or uncle, a neighbor, a teacher, a coach, a minister, a youth leader, or another adult you see often who cares and whom you feel comfortable talking to. They might be able to help you or at least be there for you during this difficult time. You should not have to face this alone.

2. **KNOW THE FACTS:** You are NOT alone.
   Millions of other children are going through what you’re going through. And many of those children also think it’s their fault and also believe they’re alone. But the TRUTH is there’re many children just like you. Maybe even some of your friends or classmates are experiencing something very similar to what you’re experiencing. You just may not know, because they probably aren’t talking about it either – just like you’re not. You are NOT alone.

3. **KNOW YOU’RE NOT GUILTY:** It is NOT your fault!
   You must know it is NOT a child’s fault when adults make choices to treat each other badly. There’s nothing you did to cause it and nothing you can do to prevent it.

4. **KNOW YOU’RE NOT RESPONSIBLE:** It’s also NOT your job to stop it.
   You’re NOT responsible for the way adults act. And it’s NOT your job to intervene and try to control the situation or to protect one adult from the other. It is NEVER a child’s job to control the actions of adults.

5. **MAKE A BETTER CHOICE:** You can make better choices when you grow up.
   You can’t control what’s happening at home now, because you’re just a child. But you’ll be able to control what you do when you get older. And you can choose not to treat other people you care about badly or use violence or anger towards them, because you know how bad it can feel. You can choose to treat people the way you want people to treat you – with kindness and respect.

6. **BUILD A BETTER FUTURE:** You can make a wonderful, happy life and home for yourself.
   When you get older, you’ll be able to create for yourself the most wonderful home and family. Millions of other children just like you grew up and did exactly that. They’re living that life right now.

7. **REALIZE YOUR INNER STRENGTH:** You have a unique strength others don’t, because of what you’ve faced.
   You’ve had to overcome obstacles other children never had to face. This makes you special – it gives you a unique strength on the inside that others may not have, because they never had to face the difficult things you’re facing.
So, when you run into a challenge as you get older, you can draw strength from this experience. Remember that you were able to get through this, so what else can you not get through in life? You’re INVINCIBLE.

8. **FIND ROLE MODELS:** Others who learned these TRUTHS have achieved great success. You can too.

Do you know who has discovered these TRUTHS? People like former President Bill Clinton, Halle Berry, Christina Aguilera, Patrick Stewart, Curtis Martin, and so many other successful people who went through similar situations and used that experience as proof that there’s nothing they can’t get through. This experience can serve as fuel for you to be and do anything you want in life.
POST-SCREENING EVALUATION FORM
(Print and pass out to CHILDREN OR TEENS attending the Nick News discussion and screening)

1. What did you think of this segment?

2. What did you learn about Childhood Domestic Violence (CDV) from this segment?

3. Can you relate to any of the children in the segment? Do you know somebody who can?

4. Do you feel more hopeful about the future now that you’ve seen the segment?

5. Did this segment teach you what to do if you or someone you know is dealing with CDV?

6. What questions do you have about CDV that the segment did not answer?
Childhood Domestic Violence Association