

Breaking the cycle of violence

[Sociology](#), [Violence](#)



“ Experience in the cities shows that the cycle of violence is a self-perpetuating phenomenon, constantly generating new violence from within itself. ” (Enns 2002 p. 3). When we observe our nation of children, as a whole group, we see a higher and higher incidence of violence among them, not to mention that it occurs at an earlier and earlier age. It is becoming almost commonplace to hear of pre-teens who have committed acts of violence, and we now are beginning to hear of children as young as six and seven committing violent acts.

It is a fact that violence begets violence, and our children are exposed to unimaginable acts from parents and caregivers. Drugs are rampant in our nation, and poverty and domestic violence are merely a way of life for many children today. According to author Kathy Sitarski, “ we all tend to take out our pain on others to one degree or another, even if only in fantasy. ” (Sitarski 2004 p. 1). This phenomenon does not occur because we are in some way inhuman, but rather because we are unable to deal with the feelings of terror and rage that come along with memories of our own pain.

When we feel helpless and powerless, or when terror threatens to overtake us, acting out toward others makes us feel more in charge in some strange way. Of course there are those who consciously choose not to take their rage and pain out on another human being, and, in many cases, turn it against themselves in the form of abusive relationships or endangering their own lives. (Sitarski 2004 p. 2). Violence can isolate us as human beings because it brings shame into our lives.

We are ashamed to have hurt another or we are ashamed that we have allowed ourselves to be abused; “ a beating feels shameful and humiliating

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and the survivor often internalizes that he or she somehow deserved it. " (Sitarski 2004 p. 2). Even witnessing violence against another can cause us to feel shame as we feel powerless to stop it. Most rapists can recall rape and physical abuse in their own histories, then they later act out the same form of violence on another. How likely is it that today's abused, neglected and ignored children will become tomorrow's violent offenders?

According to the National Institute of Justice it is extremely likely; results of a detailed study show that childhood abuse and neglect " increase the odds of future delinquency and adult criminality overall by 29 percent. " (National 2001 p. 1). Further statistics are equally appalling: the abused or neglected child has a 59 percent increased likelihood of juvenile arrest, and 28 percent increased likelihood of adult arrest, and 30 percent increased likelihood of having committed a truly violent crime. These statistics give us an idea of what the " cycle of violence" leaves in its wake.

Nationwide, the incidence of neglect is some two and a half times that of physical abuse. Neglect can also have the potential to be even more damaging to the development of a child than physical abuse. (National 2001 p. 3). When we think of abuse and neglect, we rarely think of malnutrition. Some children are literally starved of the basic nutrition and food their bodies need to grow as small children. Malnourished children will later show attention deficits, reduced social skills, and poorer emotional stability than the comparison group.

Unfortunately, our system of incarceration fails miserably in the sense that the " punishment phase" of prison is meant to " blame, shame, ridicule, beat down and break the spirit of people who have broken the law. " (Sitarski <https://assignbuster.com/breaking-the-cycle-of-violence/>

2004 p. 3). While most all of us would certainly agree that those who commit violent crimes must be incarcerated, must be kept from the population at large, we are punishing these people in the same ways that actually turned them to violence in the first place. Those long-held feelings of terror and rage, rather than being relieved in some way, only increase with every day spent in the violent atmosphere of prison.

If we really believe in the rehabilitation theory of prison, a long hard look needs to be taken at our prison system, and some practices put into place to actually break this vicious cycle of violence that will continue to repeat itself until interrupted. Early intervention is the key to stopping this destructive cycle; children at risk need to be identified early and swift measures need to be taken to try and relieve some of the terror and rage felt by the abused and neglected child.

When this takes place, one link in the cycle is broken, perhaps leading to another and another. Works Cited About Domestic Violence (2003). Cycle of Violence. Retrieved December 11, 2006 from: <http://www.edvpor/aboutDV/cycle.htm> Enns, Fernando (2001). Breaking the Cycle of Violence. From the Ecumenical Review, Volume 53, Issue 2. Retrieved December 9, 2006 from: <http://www.questia.com> Hopper, Jim (1997). Factors in the Cycle of Violence: Gender Rigidity and Emotional Constriction. Retrieved December 11, 2006 from: <http://www.jimhopper.com/cycle>

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