

KEEPING YOURSELF SAFE WHEN THERE IS VIOLENCE IN THE HOME

Most physical and sexual violence occurs between kids and non-strangers. Homes where there is domestic violence, or family violence or abuse between adults most often includes abuse of the children too.

When there is violence and/or abuse in the home, most of the time girls are sexually abused too. **So, how do you keep yourself safe in your own home?**

What you should know:

- The violence is not your fault. It's not about you.
- You deserve to be safe, loved, respected and cared for.
- You are made in the image of God and belong to him alone.
- You have rights too.
- Honor and obedience doesn't apply when your health or life is at risk
- Know your local helpers.

How can teens stay safe at home when exposed to domestic violence?

- **Do not** go where the violence is taking place.
- **Do not** get involved verbally or physically.
- **Do not** go near or attempt to use a weapon.
- **Do not** ask whether you should call for help.
- **Do** move yourself to a low-risk area, such as outdoors, or a room that preferably has access to an exit door to outdoors, or to the location of a person on your safety plan list.
- **Do** call 911 if it's possible to do so without risk.
- **Do** have a list of trusted adults you can call.

Be Prepared

- Create a personal safety plan and keep it nearby or within easy access.
- Practice how to get out of your home safely. If you have younger siblings, practice with them.
- Develop code words with the people on your safety plan list or signs for your neighbors to communicate your situation, location, need for help, and/or next step(s).

Know and accept your limitations

- You can only change you.
- You can only save you (maybe your siblings).
- You can't fix the problem at home (you don't have the problem).
- You can get help for you.
- You do have rights and power over your life.
- You can't remain healthy in an unhealthy environment.
- You don't have to behave like the adults in your home.

Be Aware

Young ladies who have experienced an adult family member, or a close friend of the family, crossing physical, sexual, verbal, emotional boundaries, know that this is not about you. It is not anything you've done, you've said, the clothes you wore, how pretty you are or how smart and talented you are. It's the perpetrator's problem. You have the power and right to say NO, to defend yourself and get help. Perpetrators try to make their victims feel guilty and ashamed so that they keep the violation a secret. It is not your fault and there is no need for shame. The shame and guilt belong to the perpetrator.

Sexual assault of a minor is a sin and crime. You have God, law enforcement, the judicial system, medical and mental health care system, child protection services, and the Covenant Church on your side. Don't let fear or shame stop you from seeking help.