



# Safe from the Start

Education and therapy to assist children aged 0-5 who have witnessed domestic violence

## Final Research Report

Dr Angela Spinney September 2008



The Salvation Army  
Australian Southern Territory



The *Safe from the Start* project has been funded by the Australian Government's Domestic and Family Violence and Sexual Assault Initiative through the Office for Women.

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## **SAFE FROM THE START RESEARCH PROJECT REPORT**



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### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The *Safe from the Start* project was funded through the Commonwealth Office for Women - Domestic and Family Violence and Sexual Assault Initiative 2007/8. The project was a Salvation Army Tasmania initiative born out of recommendations from the Salvation Army Tasmania research study "States of Mind" (Bell, 2006)<sup>1</sup>, which considered the specific needs of children, aged up to five, affected by family violence.

The main aims of the *Safe from the Start* project were to;

- Identify key elements of best practice for working with children, aged up to six, affected by family violence
- Identify effective assessment tools
- Identify and form a register of intervention activities and therapeutic play which can be used by children's workers and parents
- Train children's service workers to work with the developed resources

The project was a community-based action research study which involved input from stake-holders to both form a steering committee, and trial resources within their relevant workplaces. The expected outcomes of the *Safe from the Start* resource kit and training module included:

- Identification of the needs of children, aged up to six, and integration into programs and case-management
- Parents and the community educated about the impact of violence on young children
- Children's activities and information for use by services and parents disseminated
- Training module developed focusing on children aged up to six
- Tasmanian services informed about best practice, latest research and the impact of violence on young children
- A final research report for application nationally

Chapter One of this report introduces the project and explains some background information relevant to the study. Chapter Two examines the need for the project,

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<sup>1</sup> Bell, E (2006) *States of Mind*, Salvation Army/UTAS

outlining what domestic and family violence is, how frequently it occurs, and its impact on young children. Chapter Three examines the link between domestic and family violence and homelessness, and how this affects young children. Chapter Four explains the rationale for using play therapy to help ameliorate the harm done to children by domestic and family violence.

The chapter also considers methods of best practice when working with young children who have experienced domestic and family violence, and how “non-professionals” can use play therapy. Chapter Five details the methodology used in deciding which play interventions should go into the *Safe from the Start* kit. In Chapter Six the puppets, books, dolls and music that make up the kit are introduced and whom they should be used with is discussed. Chapter Seven overviews the six training workshops that were held across Tasmania. Chapter Eight is the final chapter and examines the evaluation recommendations and future options for the *Safe from the Start* project.

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# Chapter One – Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

In Australia most women who are victims of domestic or family violence have children. As a result, the majority of those living in homeless accommodation refuges are children. In the past, the impact of living in violent households on children has been neglected more often than the impact this situation has on the women themselves (Mullender and Morley, 1994).

In Australia refuges and shelters are funded through the Commonwealth Government's Supported Accommodation and Assistance Program (SAAP). Although children's workers within refuges are also funded by SAAP, their work has often been given low status. In some cases children's work has consisted mostly of providing the children with entertainment and of providing mothers with babysitting facilities whilst they look for move-on accommodation. Children living in refuges to-date, have infrequently been given the opportunity to reflect on their experiences, however, research has shown that a "front-line" response, in a non-therapeutic environment such as a homeless refuge, or through other domestic or family violence services, can have a beneficial impact on the long-term mental health prognosis of children.

*Safe from the Start* attempted to address the imbalances in the ways the needs of adult and child clients are catered for in the Australian domestic and family violence system and, in doing so, enabled a unique opportunity for the domestic and family violence services across Tasmania to work collaboratively. Between September 2007 and August 2008 the *Safe from the Start* project investigated and researched the effectiveness of intervention tools, such as toys and books, used by mothers and frontline domestic and family violence service workers to assist young children to explore their experiences in a safe and supportive environment.

## 1.2 Background

*Safe from the Start* was initiated by Nell Kuilenburg of The Salvation Army Tasmania. The project was informed by, and emerges from, another project: *'States of Mind': A best practice framework for Women's Immediate Emergency Accommodation SAAP services in Tasmania working with children aged 0-5 exposed to domestic violence* (Bell 2006). "States of Mind" considered the specific needs of children aged 0-5 affected by family violence in Tasmanian Women's Immediate Emergency Accommodation (IEA) services. It used a select literature review, as well as the results of formal interviews with the managers of Women's IEA SAAP accommodation services, to develop key directions for moving policy and practices forward. "States of Mind" suggested an ethos statement and set of principles for guiding the work of Tasmanian IEA Women's SAAP services as it relates to the needs of children (0-5) exposed to family violence and listed

suggested assessment tools useful to SAAP services and relevant electronic links for practitioners.

The significant damage experienced by children in these formative years highlighted the seriousness of the problem, not only for the immediate effects, but also the long-term effects on children. Funding was sought from the Commonwealth's Office for Women - Domestic and Family Violence and Sexual Assault Initiative 2007/08 and the Salvation Army employed Dr Angela Spinney as the Research Project Officer, to conduct the project over a twelve month period from September 2007 to the end of August 2008.

This report details the progress of the project from start to finish. It is intended to be disseminated across Australia for application nationally. Chapter One of this report introduces the project and explains some background information relevant to the study. Chapter Two examines the need for the project, outlining what domestic and family violence is, how frequently it occurs, and its impact on young children. Chapter Three examines the link between domestic and family violence and homelessness, and how this affects young children. Chapter Four explains the rationale for using play therapy to help ameliorate the harm done to children by domestic and family violence. The chapter also considers methods of best practice when working with young children who have experienced domestic and family violence, and how "non-professionals" can use play therapy. Chapter Five details the methodology used in deciding which play interventions should go into the *Safe from the Start* kit. In Chapter Six the puppets, books, dolls and music that make up the kit are introduced and whom they should be used with is discussed. Chapter Seven overviews the six training workshops that were held across Tasmania. Chapter Eight is the final chapter and examines the evaluation recommendations and future options for the *Safe from the Start* project.

### **1.3 The aims and objectives of the *Safe from the Start* Project**

The main aims of the *Safe from the Start* project were to:

- Identify key elements of best practice for working with children, aged up to six, affected by family violence
- Identify effective assessment tools
- Identify, and form a register of intervention activities and therapeutic play which can be used by children's workers and parents
- Train children's service workers to work with the resources researched and developed

The objectives of the project were to:

- Identify and form a register of intervention activities and therapeutic play which children's workers and parents could use when working with children, aged up to six, exposed to family violence.
- To develop a set of resources and tools to enable effective intervention in services and programs working with families responding to the needs of small children aged 0-6, exposed to domestic violence – through working with agencies and

stakeholders to trial a number of existing resources and adapting these for children exposed to domestic violence.

- The main focus of the project has been to develop strength-based resources for use when working with parents with young children aged 0-6 affected by violence in the relationships of their parents. A range of existing resources have been researched, tested and developed into a transportable program that can be used by parents, teachers and workers in government and non-government sectors.

## **1.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has introduced the *Safe from the Start* project and explained some background information relevant to the study. Chapter Two examines the need for the project, and outlines what domestic and family violence is, how frequently it occurs, and its impact on young children.

# Chapter Two – The need for the project

## 2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines in greater detail what domestic or family violence is, how frequently it occurs, and the impact it has on young children.

## 2.2 What is domestic or family violence?

Domestic or family violence can be described as physical, sexual, emotional, economic or social abuse. Such abuse involves the systemic control of an individual, and is often, but not always, a pattern of behaviour used by men against women (Cunningham/Baker, 2007). It occurs when a family member, partner or ex-partner attempts to physically or psychologically control or dominate another. The term can refer to violence between spouses, but also between cohabitants and non-married intimate partners. The term 'family violence' is preferred by many indigenous communities and includes all forms of violence in intimate relationships, covering a broad range of family relationships. Perpetrators and victims of family violence can include, for example, aunts, uncles, cousins, and children of previous relationships, as the term 'family' covers a diverse range of reciprocal ties of obligation and mutual support. Domestic and family violence is found in all communities and across all demographics including age, gender, cultural, socio-economic, religious and educational.

Domestic and family violence can be summarised as:

- A pattern of coercive behaviour used to maintain control over a partner
- Physical, emotional, sexual or financial abuse, enforced social isolation and intimidation
- A learned behaviour
- Never justified by the behaviour of the victim
- Never caused by anger, stress, drugs/alcohol, or external factors or pressures
- Always the responsibility of the perpetrator
- Found in all age, cultural, socio-economic, educational and religious groups
- Not healthy for the children who live with it
- A factor that puts children at risk for physical maltreatment themselves

(Baker and Cunningham, 2004)

The Power and Control Wheel below was developed in Duluth, Minnesota, in order to help women put a name to the abuse they were suffering. It was designed following interviews with women who had experienced domestic violence. At the centre of the wheel is the intention, the purpose of all the abusive tactics, to establish power and control. Each spoke of the wheel represents a particular characteristic. The rim of the wheel encompassing each characteristic is physical abuse and the threat of violence.



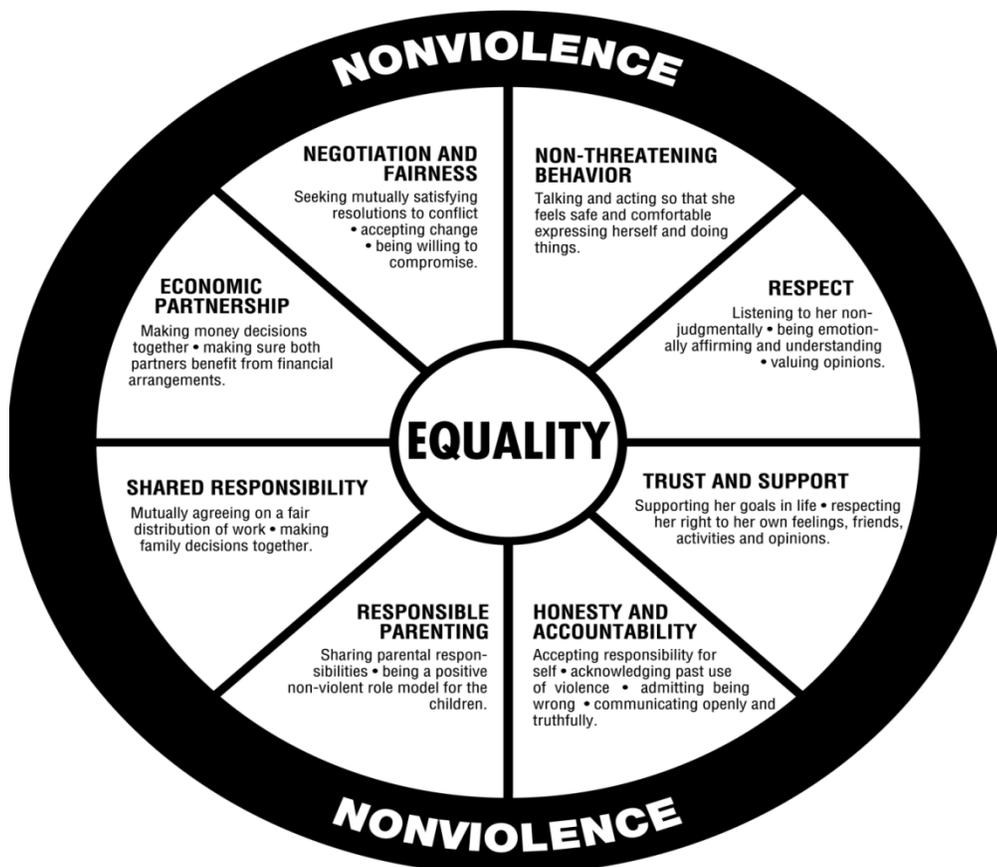
(DOMESTIC ABUSE INTERVENTION PROJECT, DULUTH)

The most common form of controlling behaviour is isolating women and children from family and friends. Other forms of controlling behaviour are:

- Threatening to injure or kill
- Controlling the finances and withholding money from the victim
- Controlling what they can wear
- Attempting or threatening suicide so the victim will not leave
- Threatening to take the children if the victim leaves
- Keeping within earshot when victim is talking to professionals
- Claiming the victim has mental health problems
- Not allowing the victim to go to bed until perpetrator gives permission
- Making all the decisions in the house or using the children against their mother
- Not letting victim take employment outside the house
- Not allowing the victim to attend to the needs of the children
- Smashing possessions or damaging the house

As will be discussed later in this chapter, the effect of power and control tactics on a mother can lead her into believing she is an inadequate parent. A woman's capacity to manage in such negative circumstances can be overwhelmed. As a result, women may use survival strategies such as using alcohol or drugs, or avoid being at home and their

bond to their children can be compromised. By contrast, and as demonstrated in the equality wheel below, power is shared equally between both parties in a healthy relationship, with neither partner controlling the other. Trust and love is built by equality between the couple. Both parties feel comfortable and safe, and are treated with respect. There is never abuse or violence in the relationship.



(DOMESTIC ABUSE INTERVENTION PROJECT, DULUTH)

### 2.3 The extent of the problem

In the most recent and detailed study the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 1998) established that nationally, one quarter of assaults related to violence in the family. The majority of victims were under forty-five, with 77% of victims being female, as compared to 23% for males. Thirty-six percent of women who had experienced violence said they had children who had witnessed the violence. This is believed to be an under-estimate as many children are far more aware of violence in the home than their parents realise (Calder, 2004).

The effect of domestic and family violence on mothers can be devastating. They are often isolated from family and friends, and live in fear not knowing when the next attack will come (Calder, 2004). In 2000, McGee noted that mother's fears for their children's

safety can be an added dimension to the abusive male's feeling of power. She gives the example of one woman holding her child at the time of attack;

*"I mean after Fred was born, and then he was only 3 days old, and he got the knife and he run it down my neck, he only caught my neck, I mean he was going to kill me, I know he was, oh it was terrible".*

(McGee, 2000)

Bagshaw and Chung (2000) found that the experiences of mothers included:

- Abuse of mother in front of children – ranging from verbal put downs through to serious physical violence
  - Torture or killing of children's pets
  - Obsessive control over what and when the children eat
  - Unreasonable control over children's outings and friendships
- (Bagshaw and Chung, 2000)

In 2004 Gayle identified the following ways in which domestic and family violence can impact on a mothers parenting;

- It is difficult to give children a sense of stability and well-being if the mother is trying to keep the peace, to keep the children out of the way and to conceal her emotions from the children
- Some mothers are constantly criticised or assaulted for not doing everything perfectly and get so run down they can't cope with cleaning and washing
- Some cannot cope with finances because they have never been allowed any control over money
- Injured women may not be able to get up and take their child to school in the morning
- Some mothers have never been allowed a close relationship with their children, and as a result, cannot talk or play with them.

(Calder, 2004)

Domestic and family violence can also have a detrimental effect on the mother-child relationship;

- Children's need for reassurance, attention and support are accentuated in situations of domestic and family violence, at the same time as the resources of the mother are taxed to the limit. Mothers constantly on their guard are exhausted and have limited energy left to devote to the children.
- Children can be deliberately used by abusive men to hurt and control women, and can be forced to witness abuse or compelled to listen to accusations about their mothers.

(Calder, 2004)

Eighty percent of female victims in the 1998 ABS survey discussed above had not sought assistance from services at all, which stresses the importance refraining from

making the assumption that the victims are receiving assistance from somebody else. The reasons for not seeking help can include fear of retribution by the perpetrator, or a belief by the victim that the perpetrator will change and cease his violent behaviour. There can also be a fear of embarrassment and shame if they report the abuse, particularly in rural and remote areas, where it is difficult to maintain anonymity and there is a significant lack of services. Indigenous and non-indigenous victims may lack faith in the criminal justice agencies and can experience a lack of cultural awareness in criminal justice agencies. Also, in some communities there can be strong pressure on victims to keep family violence hidden. Victims from non-English speaking backgrounds can fear rejection by their community if they report abuse or end a violent relationship, and fear deportation if on temporary visas, or if sponsored as spouses or prospective spouses. Victims with a disability have a greater vulnerability to abuse due to factors such as dependence on carers and social isolation. It can be more difficult to leave a violent relationship due to dependence on care, difficulties in communication and inadequate access to resources and services.

## **2.4 The impact of domestic and family violence on children**

In the past few years there has been a dramatic increase in research on the effects of domestic or family violence on family members. These studies indicate that domestic or family violence may affect children's emotional and cognitive development, social functioning, ability to learn, moral development and ability to negotiate intimate relationships later in life (Whitfield et al, 2003, Weinreb and McAlister, 2007). One in four children who have witnessed domestic violence have serious social and behavioural problems.

## **2.5 How children experience domestic and family violence**

Children can experience domestic or family violence in several ways (Cunningham and Baker, 2007). Their experiences can include the perpetrator hitting or threatening a child while in their mother's arms, seeing the effects of the violence the following morning in terms of blood, bruising and damage to the home, and hearing the violence occurring after they have gone to bed. Children are exposed to domestic and family violence by seeing a mother demeaned, hearing loud conflict and violence, seeing the aftermath, learning what happens to a mother or being used by an abusive parent as part of the abuse. Children are not passive witnesses to events in their home and those living with conflict and abuse will actively interpret, predict, and assess their roles in causing a fight. They will also worry about the consequences, and engage in measures to protect themselves or their sibling (Cunningham and Baker, 2007).

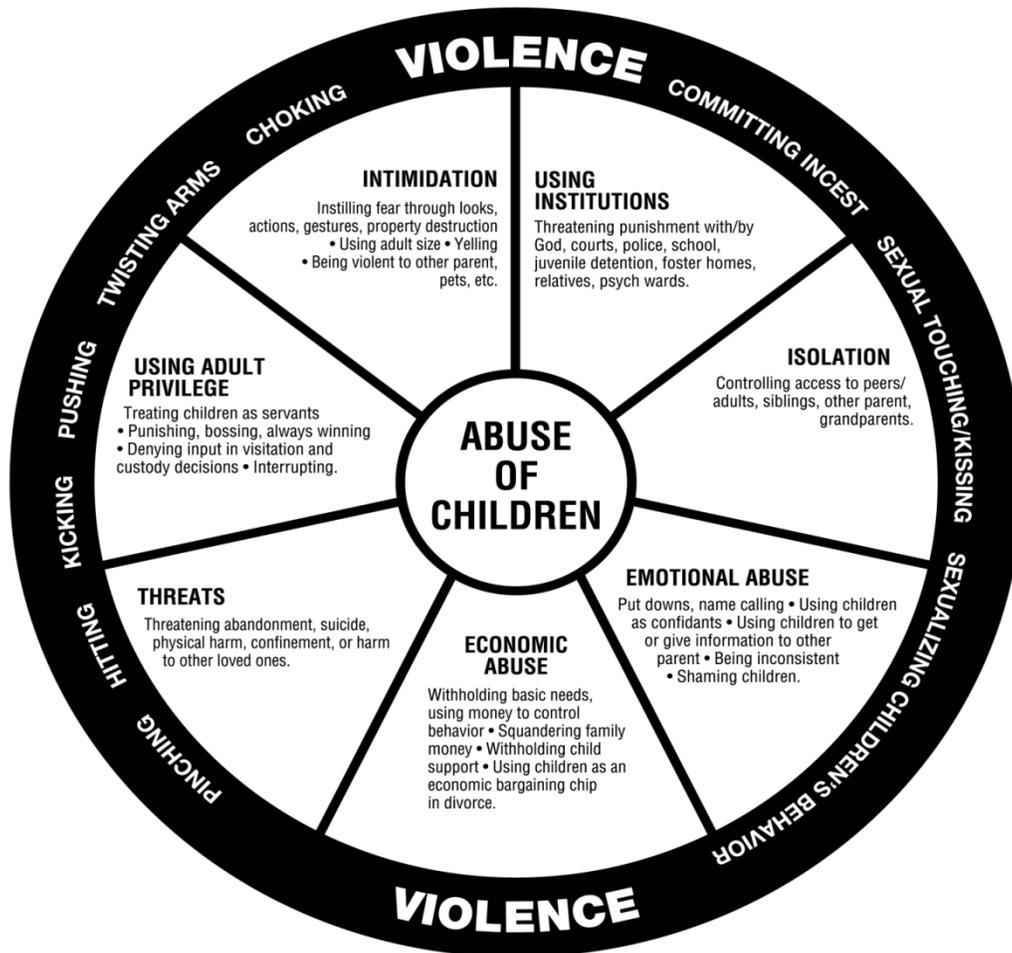
Children can also experience domestic or family violence in the following ways:

- Hitting or threatening a child while in their mothers arms
- Taking a child hostage to force the mothers return to the home
- Using a child as a physical weapon against the victim
- Forcing the child to watch assaults against the abused
- Forcing the child to participate in the abuse

- Child may be injured when trying to intervene to protect the mother
- Child being physically caught up in the violence between the adults
- Child may be killed in the process

(Calder, 2004)

The Abuse of Children wheel below was used in the *Safe from the Start* training sessions. Participants found the wheel to be helpful in understanding the ways in which children can experience domestic or family violence.



(DOMESTIC ABUSE INTERVENTION PROJECT, DULUTH)

In 2000 McGee gave examples of children’s experiences of domestic and family violence which illustrate the depth of their experiences:

*“Daddy punched my mum. My mum just didn’t do nothing back and then he started punching her even harder.”*

(Paul, aged 6, from McGee, 2000)

*“What I heard was a lot of shouting and screaming and the shouting was mostly my dad because he did have, he’s got quite a loud voice and my mum was screaming. And when she came downstairs next day and she had a big bruise and it really hurt and she had some scratches as well. And I kept on asking her if she was OK and she wasn’t.”*

(Regina, aged 9, from McGee, 2000)

## **2.6 What domestic and family violence does to children**

Such experiences psychologically rob children of both their father and their mother. One parent is the frightening aggressor, whilst the other is the terrified victim. Young children who depend exclusively on their parents to protect them are very psychologically vulnerable in such circumstances because they cannot trust their caretaking environment to reliably protect them. For children under four, their perception of the danger towards their caregiver is a strong risk factor, because their perception of their own safety is closely linked to the perceived safety of their caregivers. If the caregiver is not safe, the effects on the child can be overwhelming (Weinreb and McAlister, 2007). If an adult and child are exposed to the same traumatic event, the child under eleven is three times more likely to develop post-traumatic stress disorder. As a result they can suffer from separation anxiety, sleep dysregulation, temper tantrums, aggression and impulsivity. Children’s physical health has also found to be affected by their experiences of domestic and family violence. Problems including asthma, eczema, eating disorders, headaches, stomach pains, disturbed sleep, feeding problems, and general developmental delays have been reported as a result of exposure to domestic and family violence (McGee, 2004).

When a baby or toddler sees violence at home they may feel distressed or scared. Babies cannot understand what is happening between adults, but they hear the noise and feel the tension. The most stressful things for this age group might be loud noise such as banging and yelling, a distracted, tense, unhappy socially isolated mother, and an angry, self-centred, inconsistent father or father figure. They may also risk the chance of being injured physically as the result of an accident or physical maltreatment, such as compromised nutrition and health (Cunningham and Baker, 2007). Dissociation and hyper vigilance are the two overarching defences babies use in the first year of life, and both are likely to be used in response to trauma. Babies may become hyper alert to the sounds and sight of violence and need to disconnect from relationships to protect themselves. Infants who experience domestic or family violence can suffer fear without ending (Thompson Salo, 2006).

Children are good observers but poor interpreters and as a result they may feel fear, confusion, guilt, anger, frustration, tummy aches, and worry. For pre-schoolers aged three to five, their experiences are more real than anything they are told. When a pre-schooler experiences violence they may worry about their own safety and about being hurt, or feel responsible (because at this young age they think everything in the world is related to them.). They may hope that a TV character or super hero can come and save them or they may tune out of the noise by concentrating hard on something else. At this age they can also worry about being arrested or taken away if the father figure has been

arrested or left, or worry that mummy will be taken away by the police. They may have nightmares about being harmed, or may try and make it stop by yelling at the abuser (Baker and Cunningham, 2007). Pre-schoolers may feel confused as to why people are saying bad things about their father, or why he cannot live with them anymore, which often makes them feel distressed and guilty (Baker and Cunningham, 2007).

Other ways that exposure to violence can affect children include:

- Anxious, whining or nervous behaviour
- Depression
- Nightmares and difficulty sleeping
- Bedwetting
- Withdrawn behaviour
- Behavioural problems like truancy or running away from home
- Frequent illnesses like headaches and stomach aches
- Poor concentration
- Low self-esteem
- Insecurity

(Darwin YMCA, 2007)

Young children may often try to hide or keep very quiet watching TV or play computer games in an effort to escape their experiences and as a means of survival. They may aim to please the perpetrator or watch them to anticipate violence, or take on adult responsibilities very early.

(Darwin YMCA, 2007)

## **2.7 How domestic and family violence changes children**

Children are not passive witnesses to noise, tension or violence at home, and growing up with violence and abuse at home changes them.

The ways in which a child can be changed by experiencing domestic and family violence include;

- Children are denied a good father and positive male role model
- Abuse can harm the mother/child bond
- Children can develop negative core beliefs about themselves
- Children can be isolated from helpful sources of support
- Unhealthy family roles can evolve in homes
- Abuse destroys a child's view of the world as a safe and predictable place
- A child's style of coping and survival may become problematic
- Children may adopt some of the rationalisations for abuse
- Children can believe that domestic or family violence is inevitable or normal

(Cunningham and Baker, 2007)

## 2.8 How the brain is affected by domestic or family violence

A series of studies over two decades show that childhood experiences of domestic and family violence can damage key areas of higher functioning in the brain, which can negatively affect the quality of future social interactions. An infant who receives very little, or negative, sensory input from a primary caregiver will initially attempt to induce positive facial expressions, before subsiding into a state of withdrawal. A non-expressive maternal face triggers a negative response in the infant. Similarly, a non-responsive infant, or an infant who displays negative facial expressions, can provoke a profound negative effect in the mother. Infants raised with an abusive, addicted or a severely depressed caregiver not only experience considerable anxiety when interacting with that caregiver, but come to associate anxiety with other social interactions. Infants also become highly attuned to the environment into which they are born. An infant reared in perilous surroundings will develop brain connections and chemical responses that are highly sensitive to signs of danger (McCain et al, 2007).

A child's early experiences have far reaching and solidifying effects on the development of their brain and behaviours. A child's experiences in the early years of life are crucial in establishing how the genes that govern various aspects of neurological development are expressed. Furthermore, these experiences are essential for vital connections that are formed in the brain right from birth. Primary caregivers, usually parents, are crucial in providing the early stimulation that drives the function of the neural pathways. The quality of exchanges between caregiver and infant serve as the foundation for the infant's signalling system and influences the child's subsequent mental and physical health. The relationship between caregiver and infant plays a pivotal role in the child's capacity to interact with others and influences neural pathways for language and higher cognitive functions (McCain et al, 2007).

Children who grow up with domestic and family violence learn powerful lessons about the use of intimidation and force in relationships. In violent homes children learn that aggression is a part of intimate relationships, that it is acceptable to relieve stress by yelling or threatening another family member (Weinreb, McAlister, 2004). Partly because of this childhood experiences of domestic and family violence are associated with greater rates of juvenile delinquency, antisocial behaviour, substance abuse and mental illness.

Older children exposed to domestic and family violence are more likely to:

- Exhibit violence and aggressive behaviour and language
- Attempt suicide
- Use and abuse drugs
- Engage in risk taking behaviour
- Commit crimes when they are teenagers
- Repeat behaviour
- Have difficulty making and keeping friends

(Darwin YMCA, 2007)

Around one in four children who have witnessed domestic or family violence, have serious social and behavioural problems. Such children are two and a half times more likely to have these problems than children from non-violent backgrounds (Wolfe et al, 1986).

The UK's Social Exclusion Task Force has stated that families facing multiple problems such as domestic or family violence and homelessness do not just have a negative impact upon themselves, but also exert a high cost on society through the cost of support services, lost productivity and the costs of policing anti-social behaviour (Cabinet Office, 2007). Failure to address the exclusion faced by such families can "levy high costs on children, parents, families, the community and wider society in terms of poor life experiences and future prospects" (Cabinet Office, 2007).

## **2.9 Conclusion**

This chapter has looked in some detail at what domestic or family violence is, how frequently it occurs, and its impact on children. The next chapter looks at the link between domestic and family violence and homelessness, and the effect this has on children.

# **Chapter Three – The link between domestic and family violence and homelessness**

## **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter looks at how becoming homeless has come to be viewed as an almost inevitable part of being a victim of domestic or family violence, and the effect this has on children.

## **3.2 Homelessness attributed to domestic or family violence in Australia**

As discussed in the previous chapter, domestic and family violence can perhaps be most easily described as a pattern of coercive behaviour used to maintain control over a partner, through a combination of physical, emotional, sexual or financial abuse, enforced social isolation and intimidation. Historical policies regarding domestic or family violence and homelessness in Australia have their source from Britain. Prior to the 18th Century, laws determined that a man had a right to beat his wife with impunity (Saville,1982). Throughout the 19th century changes in the law were aimed at regulating the nature and severity of chastisement, rather than stopping it altogether (Department of Premier and Cabinet, 1985). During the 1960's, domestic or family violence came to be regarded as a public concern and was discussed in medical and psychiatric journals. During this period it was widely recognised, by social workers and academics, that domestic or family violence affected only a small proportion of the population and was aberrant behaviour, confined to working class families and to racial and cultural minorities (Department of Premier and Cabinet, 1985). Discussion on the causes of domestic or family violence at this time focused on the personality traits of the individuals concerned, with the victims being seen as masochistic, and therefore responsible for their plight (Women's Halfway House Collective, 1976).

The second wave of feminism in the 1970's provided a theoretical framework from which the feminist domestic or family violence refuge movement evolved. The model of refuge homelessness provision, provided by the feminist movement, developed from the belief that there was a close link between violence in the home and the nature of family power relations (O'Donnell and Craney, 1982), and that women who came to a refuge were no different from other women, except in the severity of the problems with which they were dealing. The emergence of new explanations of the causes of domestic or family violence therefore had implications on how policy responses to homelessness attributed to domestic and how family violence developed.

Understanding homelessness includes recognising that it is a multi-dimensional situation shaped by a complex set of multiple risk factors. Structural factors create the conditions within which homelessness can occur, but people with personal problems are more vulnerable to these adverse social and economic trends than others (Parker and Fopp, 2004). Views regarding the concepts of what a home is, are highly relevant to any work with those whose homelessness is linked to domestic or family violence. Those who suffer abuse within the home are likely to feel homeless whilst at home, because

they do not feel secure there. It is not the physical structure of a dwelling that makes a home, but the meaning that people attach to that place. The use of home as a base from which to run life is described by Vaiou and Lykogianni (2006):

*Everyday life is connected to places where women and men live, work, consume, relate to others, forge identities, cope with or challenge routine, habit and established codes of conduct.*

(Vaiou and Lykogianni, 2006, p732)

Housing in Australia has traditionally been based around the family and the stereotyped gender roles of male head of household, with a wife and children at home. Single parent women are disadvantaged in their ability to access housing, and their experiences of the housing system are different from those of men. Women are more vulnerable than men to poverty as a result of having a weaker position in the labour market. Divorced, separated and single men have higher disposable incomes than women after a relationship breakdown, and are more likely than women to move into private rented accommodation (Gilroy and Woods, 1994). Relationship breakdown almost always leads to women becoming poorer. Women are particularly vulnerable to homelessness because of their economic position (Chung et al, 2000). Cramer and Carter, (2002) found that gender is an important factor in determining the housing options available and choices made. The feminisation of poverty is linked to the changing image of homelessness in Australia, where lack of income is the primary underlying reason for becoming homeless. The majority of households require two incomes to enter owner-occupation, which is one of the reasons why domestic or family violence can lead to a major risk of housing instability.

There are a range of views regarding the extent to which domestic or family violence can and, in what way should, be linked to homelessness. Feminist academics maintain that women's homelessness through domestic or family violence is a manifestation of structural inequalities within society (Nunan, 2005). Most women using homelessness services designed for victims of domestic or family violence in Australia do have a dwelling, but cannot live there because of violence. This is often due to the inability of society to prevent men's violence and abuse. Nunan categorises homelessness for this group of women and children as a symptom of the problem (violence), rather than as a cause of their problem. When women and children are forced to leave their homes because of violence, the loss of their home in itself will often have a traumatic impact. Malos and Hague (1997) found that it was difficult to disentangle these mixed elements of the sense of loss that came about from having to leave the home because of violence.

Chung et al (2000) argue that in order to live without violence from intimate partners women are forced, or encouraged, to leave their home and seek alternative accommodation. They also found that as a result of leaving the home, women (and their children) experienced considerable social and personal disruption and financial disadvantage. Furthermore, in Australia female headed households are among the most disadvantaged when it comes to securing appropriate housing. Women and children who are subjected to domestic or family violence are vulnerable to homelessness in two ways: because violence disrupts and violates the sense of safety and belonging that are

associated with the home, and because when women and children make the decision to leave a family violence situation, they are usually required to leave their homes. Relationships with support networks are often severed in the process, and women and their children can face isolation, emotional trauma and acute economic disadvantage as a result of their decision to leave.

Nationally, emergency accommodation for those made homeless by domestic or family violence is currently funded through the Commonwealth Government's Supported Accommodation and Assistance Program (SAAP). Although up to 86% of children are either in the same or an adjoining room when a domestic or family violence incident occurs, and are aware of what is going on (Abrahams, 1994), historically the impact on children of living in violent households has been neglected (Mullender and Morley, 1994). Children's workers within refuges are funded by SAAP, but their work to date has frequently been given low status, consisting mostly of providing children with entertainment, and mothers with babysitting whilst they seek move-on accommodation in the private rented sector. Unlike their mothers, children living in refuges in Australia are not usually given the opportunity to begin to come to terms with their experiences. Indeed, they have tended to be distracted from thinking about what they have been through.

The recent Australian Green Paper on Homelessness, "Which Way Home – A new approach to Homelessness" highlights that for women, homelessness often follows domestic or family violence;

*Domestic violence, family violence and family breakdown are the major reasons females approach homeless services for assistance. Domestic violence was cited as the main reason for seeking support of 54% of SAAP support periods for women and children.*

(Commonwealth Government, May 2008, P15)

In Australia, most of the women who enter homeless accommodation because of domestic or family violence have accompanying children. As women frequently bring more than one child with them, the majority of those accommodated in domestic or family violence refuges are children. Almost one in ten of all homeless Australians are aged under twelve, and three quarters are under ten (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2007). In 2005/6 54,700 children accompanied their parents in SAAP services, and most of these had previously either witnessed or experienced family violence and sexual abuse (SAAP, 2006). Nearly two percent of Australian children under the age of five sleep in crisis accommodation at some stage during the year.

Whatever the causes, for children, homelessness brings trauma and affects routines and friendships. Children who have been homeless are more likely to experience emotional and behavioural problems such as distress, depression anger and aggression. Experiencing homelessness as a child makes adult homelessness more likely (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2007).

### 3.3 Conclusion

The last two chapters have explained the 'double whammy' that plays out for children who both experience, and are made homeless by domestic or family violence. It is within this context that the *Safe from the Start* research project attempted to find ways to address the imbalances in the ways that the needs of adult and child clients are catered for in the Australian homeless and domestic or family violence system. Fortunately most psychological problems in children diminish once the violence stops, and research shows that living with violence as a child is not necessarily a 'life sentence' for a bad future. A child who lives with violence is forever changed, but not forever 'damaged' and there is a lot that we can do to improve their future prospects (Baker and Cunningham, 2007). The following chapter looks at the use of play therapy to help ameliorate the harm done to children as a result of experiencing domestic or family violence.

# Chapter Four – Play therapy

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at best practice when working with young children who have experienced domestic or family violence. It starts with looking at what to do when a child discloses that they are experiencing violence at home, or when you suspect violence is occurring. This is followed by an examination of the rationale and best practice models for play therapies.

## 4.2 Best practice for when violence at home is disclosed

When you become aware that a child might be experiencing violence in their home, it is important to connect with the child. It is imperative to talk to, rather than talk about, the infant and not to use toys just as a distraction (Thompson Salo, 2006). It is also necessary to encourage children to accept that it is not their responsibility to keep their mother safe when adults' fight, and that domestic or family violence is an adult problem and that adults need to fix it.

When a child discloses information regarding abuse, you have an enormous responsibility to appreciate how difficult it was to reveal a family secret, and understand the risk to the child if you do not respond appropriately. Cunningham and Baker advise that you should assume the child has decided that help is needed and allow the child to tell his or her story. Reassure the child by validating his or her feelings, and do not criticise or speak negatively about what they tell you. Few children admit they have problems however, (Boyd Webb, 2007), and you may pick up other behavioural signs, as discussed in Chapter Two, indicating significant problems at home.

Darwin YMCA, in their Children and Violence information resource kit, give the following helpful list of "DO'S and "DON'TS" about what to do if a child tells you abuse is happening;

<b>DO</b>	<b>DON'T</b>
Listen carefully to what the child is saying	Avoid or reject them, you might be the only significant adult in their lives
Acknowledge how hard it is to talk about these things	Investigate further yourself, unless it is within your professional duties
Tell the child you believe them and take them seriously	Press for details or inquire further into the details of the abuse, unless it is part of your job
Make it clear that whatever happened is not the child's fault and the child is not bad	Make promises you can't keep, for example not to tell anyone
Tell the child that grown-ups sometimes do the wrong thing and that this has also happened to others	Seek medical attention or treatment unless it's an emergency or there are serious health risks to the child

Believe, validate and support the child	Pressure the child to show you injuries that are covered by clothing
Tell the child honestly that you have a legal duty to tell someone so that they can stop the abuses	Confront the parents, guardians or alleged perpetrator, This may place the child at risk, for example the child at risk, for example the parents might threaten the child not to make further disclosures and/or remove the child from a place of safety

(Darwin YMCA, 2007)

Section 6.2 has more information on disclosure and on assessing who the *Safe from the Start* toolkit should be used with.

### 4.3 Why play therapy?

Children think and behave differently from adults, so the approach we take with them must be different. Play therapy methods have been adapted to accommodate the world of childhood, using the medium of play as the means for communicating symbolically with the child. Play is an activity usually undertaken “just for the fun of it”, but it serves multiple key functions for the young. It encourages creativity, imagination, and general intelligence, and enables children to discharge their emotions (Boyd Webb, 2007). Under extreme stress, children turn their play efforts to very specific purposes and use their play to try to master their fear-provoking pasts and anticipated futures; ‘Children’s overwhelming need to play out crisis or trauma suits our purposes’ (P47, Boyd Webb, 2007). Play therapy started in the 1920’s when Anne Freud utilised toys and games as a means to build a relationship with her child patients. It has been developed as a means to relieve children’s emotional distress and also works to remove obstacles to the child’s development.

### 4.4 How “non-professionals” can use play therapy

As discussed above, play is the main way that children make sense of the world, and is an effective method of learning for young children. It is through play that ideas and skills become meaningful, where tools for learning are practiced, and concepts understood. Play encourages young children and promotes learning (Boyd Webb, 2007). It is possible for caring adults who do not have a therapy background to engage in useful play with children, through combining verbal and behavioural interactions. The role of an adult in play therapy is to participate and in pay with the child, being careful to follow the child’s lead, without jumping ahead. However, the adult can ask the child to describe the play activity, and suggest motives or feelings in the context of the play limits when the need arises (Boyd Webb, 2007). Carefully making connections between the child’s symbolic play and their own life is helpful if you know the child however, it is not essential to think too far beyond the metaphor of the game. It is not necessary to make a verbal connection between the play and the child’s life if you do not feel comfortable doing so or do not know the child well enough, as the play therapy can still be useful for the child and assist symptom relief for things like aggression. Simply

listening actively, and talking to kids and taking what they say seriously, can be a positive therapeutic intervention (Boyd Webb, 2007).

There are a range of play therapy methods. Art techniques involve drawing a person, family, house, and tree, or whatever you and the child wish. Modelling clay is useful, especially if the clay needs pounding, poking, squeezing and squishing. Crayons, paper of different colours, scissors, glue, paste, scotch tape, finger-paints, magazines for cutting out, can all be useful tools for art play therapy. Doll play is also useful because often a child will name a family of dolls the same names as their own family. The use of puppets rests on the assumptions that the child identifies with the puppet, and projects his or her own feelings onto the play figure. The advantage of hand and finger puppet play is that it allows the child and adult to talk about feelings with no acknowledgement that the child has similar feelings. Storytelling is also a form of play therapy, and is useful because it helps the child to reconsider alternative solutions to a problem situation. Each time you read a book to a child they are learning new skills and developing an understanding of their own feelings and behaviours. Storytelling can be combined with puppet play, to take the story forward and find out what happens next. It is not necessary to have too many playthings out at once as this can over stimulate the child (Boyd Webb, 2007).

#### **4.5 Movement as therapy**

In the past few years research has revealed that traumatised people need to have physical and sensory experiences in order to be able to tolerate their sensations, unlock their bodies and activate effective fight or flight responses. The nature of trauma is that the brain does not know it comes to an end. As a result of this, children need to be made physiologically aware that things can change over time, and that circumstances and emotions can build up over time and then stop (Van Der Kolk, 2007). The brain is the organ that influences all muscle movement and all of us need to play, talk, and move regularly in order to maintain a healthy mind. For this reason, play therapy that includes movement; such as dance, action songs and rope jumping to rhythmic chants allows effective intervention to be made at a sub language level.

#### **4.6 Suggested further reading**

BRAINWAVE TRUST (2006) *Seeing, Hearing and Feeling Violence Changes the Way your Child's Brain Grows*. [www.brainwave.org.nz](http://www.brainwave.org.nz)

BOYD WEBB, N. 2007. *Play Therapy with children in crisis*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. New York, Guildford Publications Inc.

CALDER, M. (2004) *Children living with domestic violence Towards a framework for assessment and intervention*, Russell House Publishing, Lyme Regis, UK.

CUNNINGHAM, A AND BAKER, L (2004) *Helping Children Thrive. Supporting Woman abuse survivors as mothers*. Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System, London Family Court Clinic, Ontario, Canada. [www.ifcc.on.ca](http://www.ifcc.on.ca)

CUNNINGHAM/BAKER (2007) *Little Eyes, Little Ears*. How Violence against a mother shapes children as they grow. Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System, London Family Court, Ontario, Canada.

DARWIN YMCA (2007) Children and Violence information resource kit.

DOMESTIC ABUSE INTERVENTION PROJECT, Duluth [www.duluth-model.org](http://www.duluth-model.org) (click on wheel gallery).

HUMPHREYS. C and STANLEY. N, ed (2006) *Domestic Violence and Child Protection Directions for Good Practice*, Jessica Kingsley, UK

McGEE, C. (2000) *Childhood Experiences of Domestic Violence*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers, UK.

MULLENDER AND MORLEY (1994) *Children living with Domestic Violence*, Whiting and Bird Ltd, UK.

THOMPSON SALO, F. 2006, ed. *The Baby as Subject*. Children's Hospital, Melbourne.

VAN DER KOLK, B. (2007) *Frontiers of trauma treatment with children and young people*. Australian Childhood Foundation Seminar December 2007, Hobart.

[www.traumacenter.org](http://www.traumacenter.org)

#### **4.8 Conclusion**

In this chapter the rationale for using play therapy with children who have experienced domestic or family violence has been examined. Chapter Five details the methodology used in deciding which play interventions went into the *Safe from the Start* toolkit. In Chapter Six the puppets, books, dolls and music that make up the kit are introduced.

## Chapter Five – Rationale and methodology

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the rationale for the *Safe from the Start* project and details the methodology used in deciding which products should be put in the kit.

### 5.2 The rationale of the *Safe from the Start* project

*The rationale behind the Safe from the Start project recognised that children do not need to be in a designated program to have a therapeutic experience, and that a relationship experience can help in the healing process*

(Thompson Salo, 2006).

*The more good experiences a baby has in a relationship the more chance there is for more connections to be made, not just emotionally but also neurologically. I think it is possible to offer something even if it is only a single encounter with an infant.*

(Thompson Salo, 2006, P3)

Children under extreme stress have an overwhelming need to play out crisis or trauma, and to use their play “to master their fear-provoking pasts and anticipated futures”, (Introduction, Boyd Webb, 2007). The medium of play can be used as a means of communicating symbolically with children as, through their play with toys, a child can demonstrate how they feel more adequately than they can with words. This knowledge means that workers assisting children in refuges, and others in front line services, can play a vital “first aid” role in allowing young children to explore their experiences in a safe and supportive environment, provided they have effective tools and adequate training in how to use them. The objective of the *Safe from the Start* project was therefore, to identify and form a register of appropriate intervention activities which children’s workers in frontline services and parents living in refuges could use for working with children, aged up to six, who had been exposed to domestic and family violence. The project also had a secondary aim to train service workers to work with the resources that were researched and developed throughout the duration of the project. The training took place in June and July 2008, and is discussed further in Chapter Seven.

### 5.3 Resource selection and trialling

A Research Project Officer was employed in September 2007 on a twelve-month contract, and two Project Reference Groups were quickly established in Hobart and Launceston. The project officer sourced a range of materials for presentation to the reference groups, who then trialled the materials with clients (parents and their children) and made recommendations for use and inclusion in a ‘resource toolkit’ that was later made available for purchase. A total of fifty-two questionnaires were completed by

mothers, and sixty-eight were completed by workers during the trial. Forty-one different products were trialled in nine different shelters, refuges, and other domestic violence organisations, in order to identify and form a register of intervention activities and therapeutic play (such as books and toys) which children's workers and parents could effectively use for working with children, aged up to six, who had experienced domestic or family violence. The data collected from the trialling process informed the final make-up of the toolkit, which is made up of a set of twenty-four resources: sixteen books; one action song book and CD; four sticker and card sets; and three tactile puppets and toys.

The Training program was delivered by Angela Davis, an experienced Salvation Army domestic violence worker and trainer.

#### **5.4 The Reference Groups**

Members of the reference groups were visited by the Research Project Officer and invited to become involved in the project by joining the group.

The terms of reference of the stakeholders represented in the reference groups were;

1. To assist with the collection of intervention tools for young children affected by domestic violence
2. To suggest other suitable members of the Reference Group
3. To raise issues for consideration concerning the research
4. To take part with the trialling of the intervention tools, and to facilitate the trialling of the materials by parents, and other suitable stakeholders
5. To take part in the evaluation of the *Safe from the Start* project by Dr Erica Bell of UTAS
6. To assist in the development of, and participate in, the *Safe from the Start* training package
7. To use the completed *Safe from the Start* "box of goodies", if appropriate
8. To disseminate information about the project

After the first Reference Group meeting in Hobart and, in accordance with prospective members of the groups wishes, it was decided to hold each meeting twice, once in Hobart and once in Launceston, in order to make it easier for people to attend from around Tasmania.

#### **5.5 Reference Group members**

Southern Reference Group members:

Angela Spinney	<i>Safe from the Start</i> Research Project Officer
Nell Kuilenburg	The Salvation Army Tasmania
Sylvia Eilermann	The Salvation Army Tasmania
Rachel Collins	The Salvation Army Tasmania

Cath	Hobart Women's Shelter
Tanya Castle-Phillips	Early Support Child Protection
Jayne Cowley	Centacare
Paula Benz	Centacare
Wendy Cronk	Family Pathways
Jacinta Atkins	Centacare
Diane Burton	McCombe House
Sandra Nichols	Jireh House

Northern Reference Group Members:

Angela Spinney	<i>Safe from the Start</i> Research Project Officer
Maz Arnold	Magnolia Place (Launceston Women's Shelter)
Allison Carpenter	Magnolia Place (Launceston Women's Shelter)
Deidre Butler	Oakleigh House
Carmen	CHYPP
Liz Kriel	CTSS Centacare CHILD
Rachel Lucas	CHYPP
Mim Domanska	CTSS Centacare
Liz Sager	Oakleigh House
Jane Fleming	DHHS
Margaret Haddon	Magnolia Place (Launceston Women's Shelter)
Rachel Lucas	CHYPP

Our thanks go to members of the Reference group, without whom this project would not have been possible. Reference Group Members agreed that the term “children who experience domestic violence” was the favoured expression because this does not discriminate between those who have and have not witnessed domestic violence, and about those whom it is not known how they have been affected by being exposed to domestic violence.

For a description of the use of the intervention materials to open up the subject of domestic and family violence with young children, it was agreed that the phrase “allowing children to explore their experiences in a safe and supportive environment” would be used.

## 5.6 Methodological process

The project officer collected a wide range of products from the USA, Canada, UK, New Zealand and Australia. With the help of the reference groups, these were whittled down to forty-one products to be trialed. Participating organisations involved in the Research Reference Groups agreed to trial the intervention tools being considered for the *Safe from the Start* toolkit, and to facilitate the trialing of the materials by parents and other suitable stakeholders. The forty-one different products were trialed in nine different shelters, refuges, and other domestic and family violence organizations in order to

identify and form a register of intervention activities and therapeutic play (such as books or play things), which children's workers and parents could use when working with children, aged up to six, who have experienced domestic or family violence. The organisations included five of the six domestic or family violence refuges in Tasmania, transitional accommodation agencies and support providers

All of the involved organisations gave written consent to take part in the trial (Appendix One). Participants in the trial (both parents and staff members) signed a consent form, and were given an information sheet about the study (Appendix Two). This document reinforced that the survey was completely anonymous and if they wished to withdraw from taking part in the trial they could do so at any time, without consequence. Participating clients involved in the services agreed to try out (or to allow their children's worker to try out) intervention tools that might help the child to come to terms with the domestic or family violence that they have been exposed to. Clients then completed a questionnaire (Appendix Three) with a staff member who assessed their thoughts and opinions on the effectiveness of the product. Staff members who trialled the products also completed a questionnaire, and also had a semi-structured interview with the *Safe from the Start* Research Project Officer. The questionnaires were administered by a coordinator within each participating organization, who went through the information sheet and consent form with participants and completed the questionnaire with client participants (or arranged for other staff members to do so). A training session was held with the *Safe from the Start* Research Project Officer in each organization before this took place.

The trialling of the intervention materials took place after the information gathered from a piloting process was available. The timetable for the process was:

- 14-25<sup>th</sup> January 2008 piloting of trialing process. This resulted in minor changes being made to the staff and parent questionnaires.
- 1<sup>st</sup> February – 20<sup>th</sup> March 2008 full scale trialing of materials by participating organisations
- 11-20<sup>th</sup> March 2008 Angela Spinney interviewed Children's and Support Workers participating in the study, and all questionnaires were collected and analysed.

The data collected, was used to inform the final make up of the *Safe from the Start* kit and the training course. The toolkit consists of books and toys that the trial showed parents and workers felt to be the most effective for young children who have experienced domestic and family violence. Of the forty-one products trialed, twenty-four have been included within the kit.

## **5.7 Ethical dimensions**

The ethical dimensions of conducting research on young vulnerable children and the fact that in Australia qualitative interviews with homeless service clients are relatively unusual (Parker and Fopp, 2004) meant that an effective research methodology had to be devised in order for participating organisations and individuals to feel comfortable

with their participation in the study. Parents and staff members were given an information sheet about the study and voluntarily signed a consent form. The information sheet reinforced that if they wished to withdraw from taking part in the trial they could do so at any time, and that this would have no impact on their accommodation provision.

The questions asked of parents and staff were developed in liaison with the reference group. For ethical reasons, care was taken to ask the questions in the third party, for example “How good do you think that this book would be in assisting a parent and child to have a conversation about the experiences they have been through?” rather than questioning specifically about how they and their child had reacted to the product. Full-trialling of the intervention materials took place after the information gathered from a piloting process was available. Piloting was conducted in two organisations, one in the north of the state and one in the south. The pilot resulted in minor alterations to the staff and parent questionnaires. In total 120 questionnaires were completed, fifty-two by mothers living in refuge accommodation and sixty-eight by refuge staff. In addition to this, seventeen qualitative interviews were conducted with children’s workers within the refuges.

The data collected has been used to inform the final make up of the *Safe from the Start* toolkit and the content of the training course, together with a book of hints and tips on how to use the products.

Informal feedback from stakeholders involved in the research process has been very positive. General comments received in regards to the products and the trials during the interviews included “Fantastic, wonderful, really effective, created different openings for conversations”, “Mum’s very happy to participate”, and “Mum’s said that until using resources they had never thought about children having feelings in all this. Now they are aware they must acknowledge their children’s feelings”.

## **5.8 Feedback**

Feedback about the products chosen for the kits from the data collection process demonstrates some of the benefits of having appropriate books and toys available to allow children to explore their experiences in a safe and supportive environment. Quotes from respondents included remarks such as;

*After reading this book mother and child had a joint language – could say ‘just like Ruby’ and know what each other means.*

*Mum didn’t want to give the book back.*

*It provided a non-threatening opportunity to discuss feelings. It was an icebreaker to lead into discussions about a number of different events and how my child was feeling.*

*The book was great for involving children and discussing with them why they felt sad etc.*

*Very good for homeless children. One little boy told his story through the book – he put his situation in the story.*

*Want a set myself, because of the reactions on the kids' faces. We can do it together.*

## **5.9 Conclusion**

This chapter has described the rationale and methodology of the *Safe from the Start* project. The next chapter looks at the products chosen for the kit.

## Chapter Six – The *Safe from the Start* toolkit

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at which children the kit should be used with, and overviews the products contained within the Tasmanian *Safe from the Start* kit. Each product chosen for the kit is described, and the findings from the *Safe from the Start* research questionnaires and interviews with mothers and support staff are considered. Tips and recommendations for how to use each product are also given. At the time of writing (end of August 2008), a total of thirty kits have been ordered by organisations within Tasmania, at a cost of \$500 plus GST each. They have been ordered by organisations such as refuges, disability services, child protection services, Department of Health and Human Services, early childhood services, children and family support counselling services and the Salvation Army.

### 6.2 Assessment – who can benefit by using this kit?

As discussed in more detail in Section 4.2, the most important way you can positively contribute is to notice when a child displays signs that not all is well at home, and to listen when that child gets up the courage to tell you about it. (Mullender and Morley, 1994). Bagshaw and Chung (2000) found that frontline workers identified limited resources and scant knowledge of domestic and family violence as barriers to intervention. “Workers primarily reported their anxieties about whether responses could be effective and whether there was potential for activities to increase rather than reduce the trauma experienced by the children. (Breckenridge and Ralfas, 2002). This was also the response of some frontline workers when first involved in the *Safe from the Start* project. Mullender and Morley (1994) note that talking to a child about this subject is not easy. You may be afraid of doing or saying the wrong thing, or not feel equipped to deal with the situation. If you are a caring person, you are going to do the “right thing” by just being there for the child (Mullender and Morley, 1994). The *Safe from the Start* Evaluation Report (Guenther, Bell, 2008) found that the resources within the kit work as a tool to help identify whether or not a child has witnessed domestic or family violence. The kit is designed to be used with all children whether or not they have been exposed to family and domestic violence, and is made up of toys and books that are available on the open market.

How to handle a disclosure by a pre-school child:

- Use short sentences only 3-5 words more than the child’s average sentence
- Use names rather than pronouns (Bob, not step-father)
- Use the child’s own terms (“Bops”)
- Rephrase questions the child doesn’t understand. If you repeat the question the child may think they gave an incorrect answer and may change it

- Do not respond to every answer with another question. Merely acknowledge the child's comment. Take care not to overwhelm the child with too many questions.
- Attempt to convey the information that the child is not alone – this happens to other families, but domestic or family violence is not ok.
- Acknowledge and explore the child's feelings. They may be scared, angry, confused or sad.
- Be patient – they may disclose information over a long period of time.
- Assess the child's safety needs with questions such as "what did you see?", "What did you hear?", and "What did you do?"
- You can say things like "All families fight sometimes. What happens in your family when someone is mad?"

(Mullender and Morley, 1994)

Indicators or signs of possible domestic or family violence in women:

- Appears nervous, ashamed or evasive
- Describes her partner as controlling or prone to anger
- Seems uncomfortable or anxious in the presence of her partner
- Is accompanied by her partner who does most of the talking
- Gives an unconvincing explanation of any injuries
- Has recently been separated or divorced

(Victorian Community Council against Violence, undated)

Indicators with children may include:

- Aggressive behaviour and language
- Anxiety, appearing nervous and withdrawn
- Difficulty adjusting to change
- Psychosomatic illness
- Restlessness
- Bedwetting
- 'Acting out', such as cruelty to animals

There are specialised assessment tools available to detect the damage done to children who have witnessed domestic or family violence. These are not necessary in deciding whether or not to use the *Safe from the Start* kit, but can be used by professionals whom you may wish to refer children who have experienced domestic or family violence.

### **6.3 The products selected for the kit**

This section examines the products chosen for the Tasmanian *Safe from the Start* kit. Each product chosen for the kit is described, and the findings from the *Safe from the Start* research given. Tips and recommendations for how to use each product are also made.

The *Safe from the Start* project was funded by the Australian Government's Domestic and Family Violence and Sexual Assault Initiative, through the Office for Women. The Australian Government accepts no responsibility for the accuracy or completeness of any material contained in this report or the toolkit, and recommends that users exercise their own skill and care with respect to its use. The material contained in the toolkit and this report does not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Government.

## **The Blue Day Book for KIDS: A lesson in cheering yourself up** (Bradley Trevor Greive)

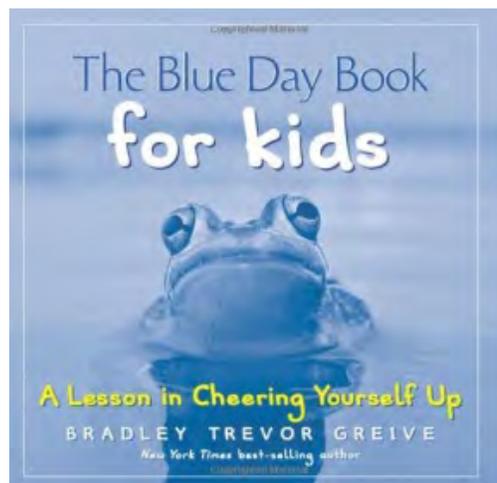
**Ages:** Under 12 years

### **Product Description**

Uses photographs of animals to lift the spirits of anyone feeling "blue" and helps young readers put negative incidents and feelings in perspective.

### **Safe from the Start Research Findings**

The general feeling about the book was that it was an excellent tool for helping children and adults to "feel better" and bring a smile to their faces. The book is a fun way to identify and discuss feelings in a non-threatening manner. One staff member said that the children she showed this to were able to laugh at the pictures whilst identifying some scary emotions they have had. The pictures give opportunities for children to talk. Others commented that it is lovely how the pictures go with each caption, and one mum said, "The book was great and the pictures made it even better, my son laughed". This book is recommended for children in the age group 2/3-5/6 years and older.



### **Suggestions for Use:**

- Show child the pictures and read the captions, gradually working your way through to the positive pages at the back of the book
- Get child to pick out a picture that reflects how they feel and discuss why they feel that way
- Discuss that everyone feels tired, grumpy, left out, or think that everything goes wrong, but that it will pass
- Get child to draw their own version of a picture
- If a child gets upset during the reading of the book talk to the child about how they are feeling and reassure the child. If this book is used in an accommodation setting talk to a worker or if in another setting refer child to professional services if required

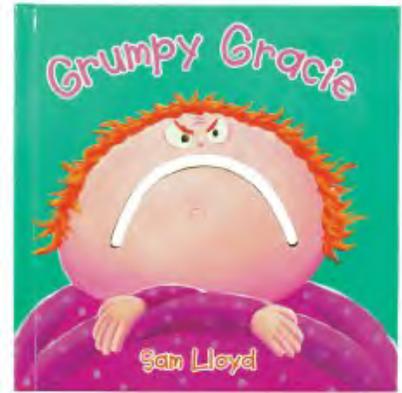
## **Grumpy Gracie**

(Sam Lloyd)

**Ages:** 3-8 years

### **Product Description**

Gracie wakes up in a grump and sets out to tell everyone about it. After making the cheerful sun, flowers and fish thoroughly miserable, she feels no better. But when a cheeky monkey teaches her that by turning upside-down she can turn her frown into a smile, she makes a new friend and realizes that making people happy again is much more fun. Grumpy Gracie is a clever book that little children will delight in. It has thick pages that little ones can turn on their own, a big frown/smile on each page for little fingers to explore and bright, colourful illustrations to hold the attention...the story is good too!



### **Safe from the Start Research Findings**

The general feeling about the book was that it was a brilliant tool for working with small children on feelings and emotions. It is humorous and illustrated in a way that appeals to the child. Children are excited and eager for the story to be repeated. One mother said “It was great to let the children hear that it’s not just them or mum who gets grumpy – because children don’t really see other people grumpy”. A staff participant said “A discussion followed on why someone might wake up feeling grumpy and also on people who stay grumpy”. Another said, “I read to boy child who was “really angry”: and acting out – it allowed child to re-focus and calm down”. A staff member reported, “Mum and child loved “Grumpy Gracie” – the 3 yr old child said “Mummy turn me upside down”. “This intervention tool is recommended for children in the age group 2-6 years.

### **Suggestions for Use:**

- The book has a cut-out frown on each page, and as Gracie turns her mood around, the child turns the book upside down, and the cut-out frowns become smiles instead
- Read through the book – be sure to start with the grumpy cut-out first and then turn book around to smiling cut-outs
- Discuss feelings of being grumpy, encouraging child to talk about things that make them grumpy and what they can do to turn the frown into a smile

## **A Terrible Thing Happened**

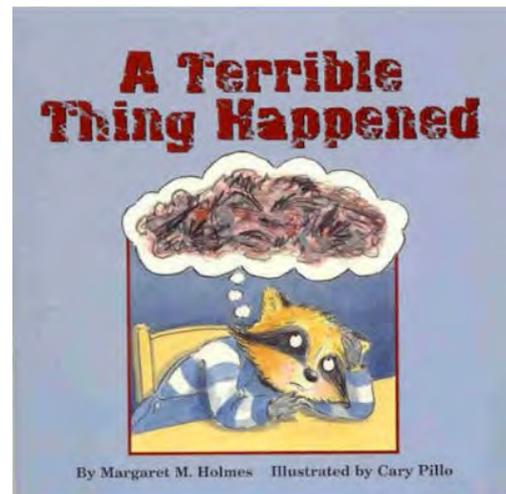
(Margaret Holmes, 2002)

**Ages:** 4-8 years

### **Product Description**

There are many kinds of abuse and there are many children exposed to different forms of abuse. The beauty of this book is that it never states what the abuse was, only the feelings of the abused. In this way, this book can be used in a variety of traumatic situations. The story tells of a little raccoon who has experienced a terrible thing. It then explores his feelings of anger, fright,

sadness, physical aches, nervousness, behaviours, and lack of appetite. It proceeds to his finding a caring adult who helps him overcome his concerns. This book is useful for children who have witnessed any kind of violent or traumatic episode, including physical abuse, school or gang violence, accidents, homicide, suicide, and natural disasters such as floods or fire. In addition extensive suggestions are offered for caregivers for helping traumatised children.



### **Safe from the Start Research Findings**

The general feeling about the book was that it was good in the way it showed that talking about your problems and feelings does help in the healing process. The book helps a child to see its best to talk about all their scary thoughts and feelings so they can start to feel better, but leaves it open to the child to bring up what happened to them if they wish to, and so is not too confronting. One participant said the book worked really well with a 3 yr old child, as it helped the child to understand why she was there and opened up a conversation. The book doesn't identify Domestic and Family Violence, but allows a child to go that way in conversation. One little child would not look at the book because they were too frightened of the picture on the opening page. This intervention tool is recommended for children in the age group 3-6 years.

### **Suggestions for Use:**

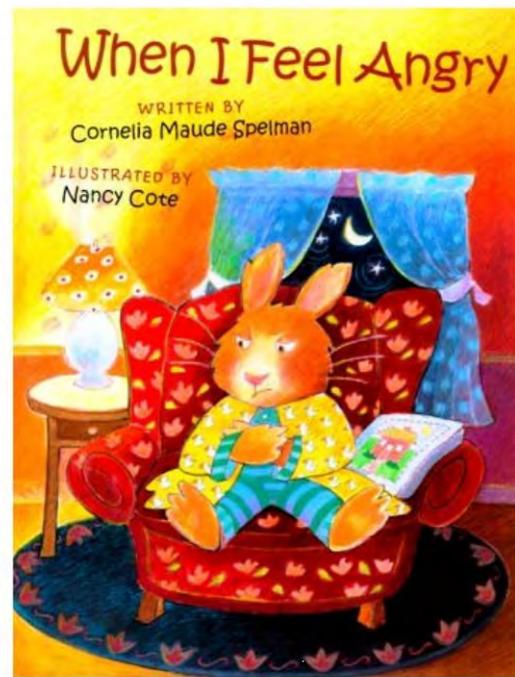
- Read the story through with the child. When discussing what happened use words that are both real and accurate and avoid euphemisms
- Help to create a safe place to eventually tell the story and express the resulting feelings
- Give the child several modes for describing or acting out the event i.e. drawing, painting, puppets
- Attempt to maintain the child's daily routine as much as possible
- Don't single the child out for special attention or privileges
- Consider having the child meet with a professional if only to rule out the need for formal therapy

## **When I feel Angry** (Cornelia Maude Spelman)

**Ages:** 3-8 years

### **Product Description**

Now and then, Little Bunny feels angry-- but she understands the difference between *feeling* angry and *acting* angry. When she's so mad she wants to scream or yell or hit, she does other things instead. For example, she rides her bike, or talks to her mom about her feelings, or spends some time by herself. When she's angry, Little Bunny knows what to do. And so will any child who reads this sweetly illustrated book.



### **Safe from the Start Research Findings**

The general feeling about the book was that it was good for letting the child know that it is ok to feel angry, and that it teaches them how to express that anger. Children express anger in all different forms. When they have experienced Domestic or Family Violence they can act out their anger the way their parent did. Others felt that the book created great opportunities for discussion – role play, discussing feelings. This intervention tool is recommended for children in the age group 3-6 years.

### **Suggestions for Use:**

- Read Notes in front of book before using
- Book can be used by parent with child
- The distinction between feeling an emotion and acting upon it is important
- Use this book to teach a child ways to manage uncomfortable and unpleasant feelings. Some ways to manage anger are outlined in the book but you and the child will find others that work
- Praise and encouragement when the child is successful at recognising and managing their emotions will reinforce their comfort and feelings of competence

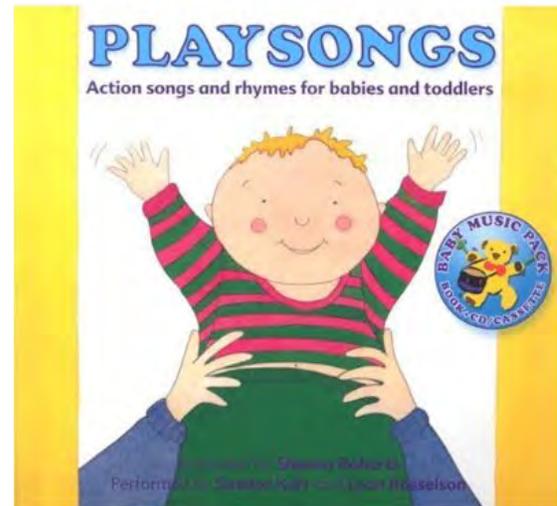
## Playsongs Book and CD

(Sheena Roberts)

**Ages:** Birth to 4 years

### Product Description

The award winning baby song book + CD. Comprehensive set of action songs, rhymes and activities. Over 70 items with clear, illustrated guidance for use. Guitars, dulcimer, autoharp, concertina, glockenspiel. Interactive play at its best.



### Safe from the Start Research Findings

The general feeling about the CD was that it is fun and brings parents and baby together and causes enjoyment for both parent and baby. The book of actions and words, and the CD, create interaction with babies, and the baby enjoys the time spent with them and the music. One mum said “It’s a great way to spend time with kids and keeping them fit. My kids just wouldn’t sit still”. A staff member said “Mother said it made her spend time with her 10 month old child”. This CD and book is recommended for children in the age group under 1-5 years.

### Suggestions for Use:

- Basic instructions are included for use to follow for successful results
- Change the actions to adjust for different age ranges
- Overcome your own inhibitions and join in
- Use the CD at the right time for the baby i.e. don’t play lullabies when the baby wants to be active
- Use the recording to learn the songs but don’t use it to replace the sound of your own voice. That is still the best sound to the baby
- Think about using them in group settings not just with individual children

## I saw it Happen

(Wendy Deaton)

**Ages: 5-6 Years**

### Product Description

Part of the GROW series. A creative, child-friendly program filled with original exercises to foster healing, self-understanding, and optimal growth. This workbook was created to help children who have experienced trauma. The design reflects the basic insight that many young children are not verbally oriented and find it hard to communicate what has hurt them. Each workbook provides a friendly but neutral environment, including plenty of space in which to write and draw. The exercises are balanced between left and right brain, thinking and feeling, and follow a therapeutic sequence: creating an alliance, debriefing painful memories, exploring delayed reactions, identifying resources and teaching coping strategies, and integrating the experience. The tasks are adaptable for use with younger children.



### Safe from the Start Research Findings

The general feeling of parents about the book was that it was really good, especially the drawing and pictures. “The kids can relate to it a lot more than a book”. The product is suitable to be used more than once with the same child over several sessions. The general feeling of staff about the book was that not all pages are suitable to be used with all kids. One worker selected several pages to add to a workbook they already had. Care needs to be taken with what page each session is finished on, and what the child will do next, so as not to leave them feeling down. This workbook is recommended for children in the age group 4-6 years +.

### Suggestions for Use:

- Read notes at back of book before use
- This is not a self help book for the parent or guardian to use on their own with a child
- The use of this book will address sensitive issues, and requires the safety, structured approach, and insight provided by a trained professional
- Provide one-on-one support and feedback
- To prevent bleeding through the paper it is suggested that water based, rather than spirit based markers or pens are used in the workbook
- Adapt the tasks and activities in the workbook, using other materials and activities as needed
- With less verbally oriented children, the use of art therapy or music or video may be recommended
- Certain exercises may be conducted in groups
- Each facing page provides the focus for a therapeutic session that may take up one session
- Children should be allowed to move through the process at their own pace
- Workbooks should not be given to the child to take with them until the therapeutic process is completed.

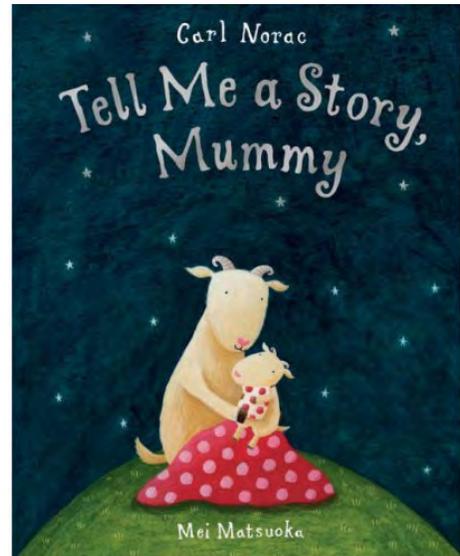
## **Tell me a Story, Mummy**

(Carl Norac)

**Ages:** 3-6 years

### **Product Description**

It's bedtime on the farmyard, but Salsa the little goat can't sleep. She tries everything until, finally, she asks Mummy to tell her a story. But tonight, even Mummy's stories don't work, and in the end it's Salsa's own sweet story which sends her into a peaceful, dreamy sleep.



### **Safe from the Start Research Findings**

The general feeling about the book was that it had a sense of sweetness and lots of love. One little boy wanted his mum to read it again and again. This intervention tool is recommended for children in the age group 3-6 years.

### **Suggestions for Use:**

- Use at night time
- Talk slowly
- Snuggle with child
- Don't allow child to go off on tangents with thoughts

## Is it Right to Fight? A first look at anger

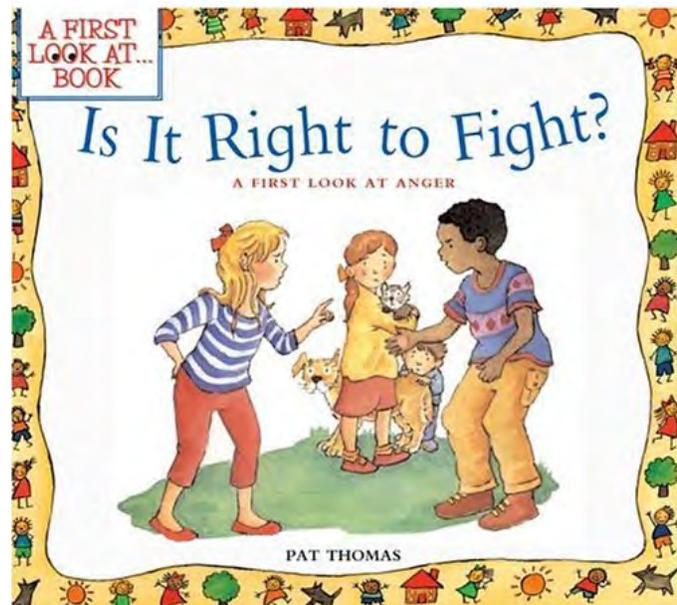
(Pat Thomas)

**Ages:** 4-8 years

### Product Description

Spats are normal among younger kids, and often lead to screaming, hitting and other expressions of anger. This book helps kids understand that it's often all right to be angry, but that it's always best to resolve conflicts peaceably. *A First Look At...* is an easy-to-understand series of books for younger children. Each title explores emotional issues and discusses the questions such difficulties invariably raise among

kids of preschool through early school age. Written by a psychotherapist and child counsellor, each title promotes positive interaction among children, parents, and teachers. The books are written in simple, direct language that makes sense to younger kids. Each title also features a guide for parents on how to use the book, a glossary, suggested additional reading, and a list of resources. There are attractive full-colour illustrations on every page.



### Safe from the Start Research Findings

The general feeling about the book was that it shows a child it is not ok for anyone to be violent towards others and we can all find other ways to solve conflict. Another participant told how the book generated a discussion on the child's behaviour and how it had felt when others (step dad) had behaved in this way. Others found it useful for sibling rivalry or school bullying, and for encouraging useful play with other children. One staff member said children asked questions about the story, which extended into their own story; "I sat with a child with this book, he told me about mum and dad fighting and we then talked further in relation to it." Others found it useful with some boys aged 4 to 8 who are really into rough and tumble stuff, "A bit old but the message came across". This intervention tool is recommended for children in the age group 4 – 6 and older.

### Suggestions for Use:

- Read notes in back of book
- Can be used by parent with child one-on-one
- Can be used in a group setting by worker
- Reader should take time to think about how they resolve conflicts in their own life
- Teach that it's okay to get angry and to use acceptable ways to express anger
- Let children discuss how they feel about current stories in media
- Answer questions honestly
- Try to bring world and local news down to child's level of understanding

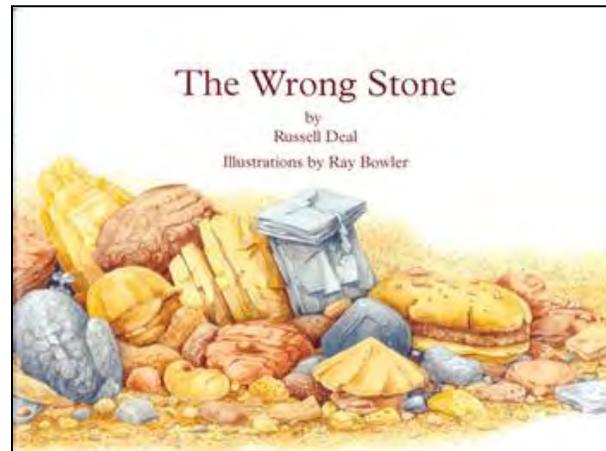
## The Wrong Stone

(Russell Deal)

**Ages:** 4+ years

### Product Description

This is an Australian Book. "I want you to build me a wall with only perfect stones," the big architect said. All the stones tried to put their best faces forward. They hid their ugly bits. But there was one stone that didn't seem to fit. He was the "Wrong Stone" and all the others were laughing at him. Will it be the crusher for him? This book possesses exquisite full-colour illustrations throughout. Enjoy the jokes, drama and most of all, the celebration of difference in this heart-warming story where everyone is valued. Imagine that. Also available in a Japanese translation.



### Safe from the Start Research Findings

The general feeling about the book and toy was that the book was enjoyable to read and was a good way of showing emotions and feelings, with lots of openings for discussions. This intervention tool is recommended for children in the age group 4-6 years +.

### Suggestions for Use:

- Read notes at back of book before using
- Use this book in one-to-one sessions or as a group with both adults and children
- Open/close a session by reading this book.
- Play a game where each person has a different shaped "paper" stone. Build the wall like a jigsaw puzzle. Each person is given a copy of a stone wall jigsaw printed on coloured paper. Each person only has one colour. The goal is to create a mosaic of the stone wall using different coloured paper 'stones', BUT the stones sitting next to each other on the wall must be different colours i.e. You could not have a yellow stone touching another yellow stone. This meant that each person needs to swap with others to get a maximum complement of colours.
- Take child out to garden to select a small stone to keep and remind them they are special

### Possible Questions:

- Have you ever felt like a "wrong stone"? How did you feel? What helps you to feel like a "right stone" again? How could you help someone else?
- Find the mouse and the lizard in each picture. What might they be saying?
- How many shapes can you see in the wall at the end of the book? Draw your own wall full of shapes.

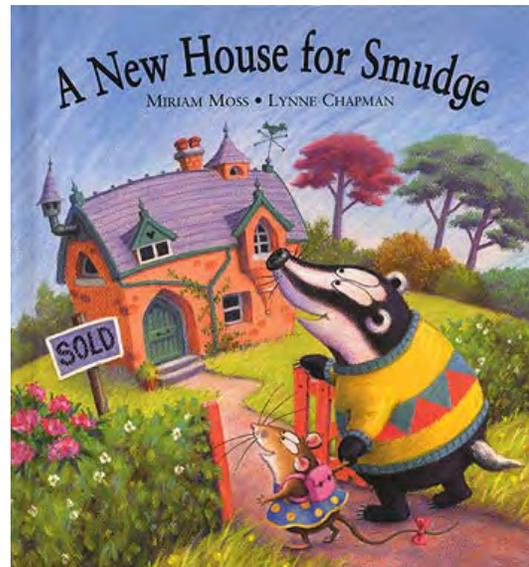
## **A New House for Smudge**

(Miriam Moss)

**Ages:** 3-6 years

### **Product Description**

Plop, plop, plop goes the rain into the bucket in Smudge and Stripe's house. There are holes in the roof and there's just not enough room anymore. Time to move! But, Smudge isn't sure she wants to. "This is my home and there's nothing wrong with it," she stubbornly insists. Will a pretty garden, with a real river running through it--and maybe even a boat--change Smudge's mind? A tale that reassures children: even though saying goodbye is sad, new beginnings can be fun. At once familiar and reassuring Smudge and Stripe are lovable characters with gentle humour. A lovely book for everyone to enjoy many times over, not just when moving house.



### **Safe from the Start Research Findings**

The general feeling of parents was that the story was gentle in the way the need for change was achieved. The illustrations and colours were warm and lovely. Staff found it really relevant for clients they were working with and that it helped the transition these children were going through. The book helps children to talk about their feelings about having to move house and so is very good for homeless children. One little boy told his story through the book – he put his situation into the story. He liked the river, boat and picnic and was happy for Smudge that lovely things happened. Good for parents as well as children. This book is recommended for children in the age group 1-6 years.

### **Suggestions for Use:**

- Read through with child in this situation
- Discuss any sad feelings the child may have
- Point out small aspects of the pictures as you read the story
- Get child to draw a picture of what their ideal house would look like

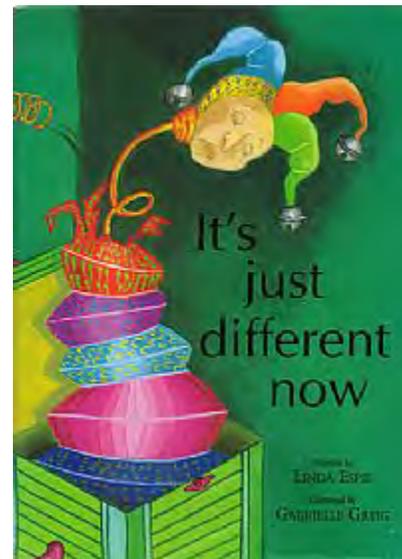
## **It's Just Different Now**

(Linda Espie)

**Ages:** 3 to 7 years

### **Product Description**

This is a moving, compassionate and beautifully illustrated book about children's grief after separation and divorce. The simplicity of the language used and the colour and clarity of the illustrations are symbolic of an underlying truth - that pain faced boldly in the light of day eventually loses some of its ferocious intensity. Although written for children, adults will find that this message of resilience has the power to touch us all.



### **Safe from the Start Research Findings**

The general feeling about the book was that it was excellent – explains things well from all points of view. The book covers general questions that child would ask. It is easy to relate to, with clear, beautiful illustrations and symbolic wording. One staff member commented however that it is specifically about fathers, and that it is often the stepfather who is violent. A mother said, “It’s a great way for children to look at it and understand”. This intervention tool is recommended for children in the age group 3-6 years.

### **Suggestions for Use:**

- Read notes at beginning of book before use
- Use correct grief and loss language
- Read the story at a leisurely pace discussing the illustrations and child’s responses
- Encourage child to use other mediums i.e. painting, drawing etc to further express their emotions

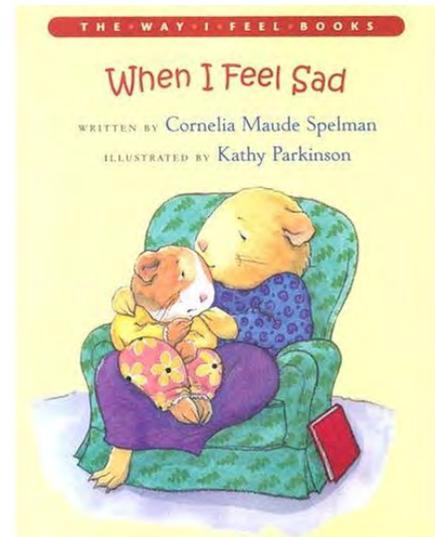
## When I feel Sad

(Cornelia Maude Spelman)

**Ages:** 3-8 years

### Product Information

Readers will recognise similar experiences in their own lives as this little guinea pig describes feeling sad when someone is cross or when something bad happens. Eventually our heroine realises that feeling sad doesn't last forever. This is a well-constructed and useful resource for individual and group sharing.



### Safe from the Start Research Findings

The general feeling about the book was that it was good, one child said it made his mum talk to him and she does not often do that. Others said it was a brilliant resource. The book focuses on sad feelings, it doesn't really address Domestic or Family Violence, but is excellent at saying it's OK to be sad about things, they are not forever. It displayed good simple language, which allowed the children to become very engaged. One staff member said the book helped a child address what sad means a lot better and that this book is great for involving children and discussing with them about when they feel sad etc. The wording used in the book was easy for 3-4 year olds to understand, and is recommended for this age group upwards.

### Suggestions for Use:

- Read notes at beginning of book before use
- Book can be used by parent with child
- Snuggle with the child whilst reading if necessary
- Read slowly and validate the child's feelings whilst reading this book together
- Seek professional help if child is sad for too long or behaviour becomes a worry
- Even though the child is sad, continuity of everyday activities is still important so don't overindulge the child to compensate
- Praise and encouragement when the child is successful at recognising and managing their emotions will reinforce their comfort and feelings of competence.

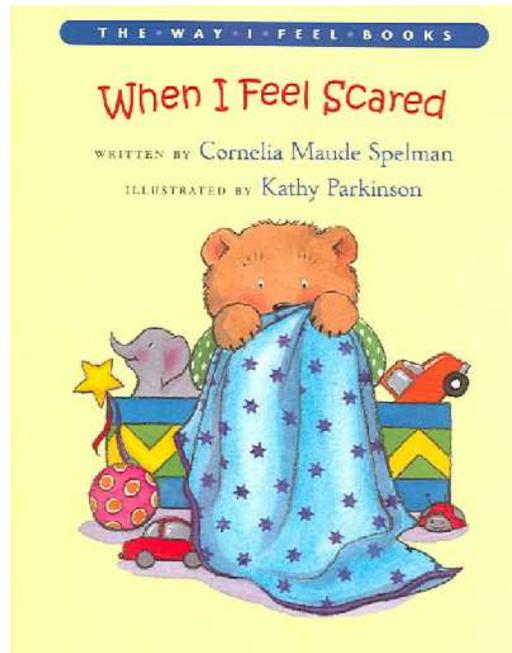
## When I feel Scared

(Cornelia Maude Spelman)

**Ages:** 3-8 years

### Product Description

A bear child describes situations that bring about fear--such as bad dreams or tall slides--how it feels to be scared, and what can make things better. This well-conceived book deals sensitively with children's fears. In the page-long author's note, Spelman makes a strong case for adults' acknowledgement of childhood fears rather than denying or downplaying them. In the story, a little bear talks about what makes him scared, what fear feels like, how the fear sometimes keeps him safe, and how he can deal with unnecessary fears. The short, well-reasoned narrative, child-centered point of view, and practical suggestions make this a good choice for preschoolers. Parkinson's expressive line-and-watercolour illustrations of the little bear and his family will strongly appeal to young children.



### Safe from the Start Research Findings

The general feeling about the book was that it was excellent – a great way for children to express themselves. The book lets children know it's ok to be scared about different things. The book uses simple language and clear illustrations with an easy level of understanding for small children on emotions and feelings in order to normalise fear. Other trial participants found it very easy to read with a clear message, and a safe and gentle approach to help children talk about their experience. The book offers a range of strategies. One staff member found it great because it enabled a conversation with a 5 yr old girl who was scared of her mother leaving at night-time. Another participant loved the book so much she has given a copy to a parent. She used the book with a developmentally delayed 5 yr old girl at the beginning and end of sessions. It helped her to name some of her fears and to establish a context at the start of the session. At the end of the session they were able to discuss what to do when she was scared. This book is recommended for children in the age group 2-6 years.

### Suggestions for Use:

- Read notes at beginning of book before use
- Book can be used by parent with child
- Read slowly and validate the child's feelings whilst reading this book together
- Even though the child is scared, continuity of everyday activities is still important so don't overindulge the child to compensate
- Praise and encouragement when the child is successful at recognising and managing their emotions will reinforce their comfort and feelings of competence

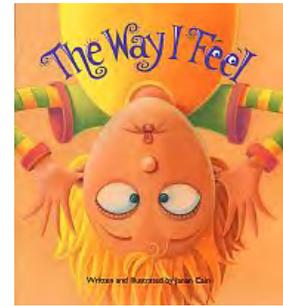
# The Way I Feel

(Janan Cain)

**Ages:** 2-5 years

## Product Description

*The Way I Feel* is a sturdy board book perfect for toddlers. This delightful introduction to emotions has been praised by parents and professionals alike for its non-judgemental descriptions of feelings. It includes a wide variety of emotions, including many not usually attributed to children. Whimsical characters clad in zany getups bounce off the pages in excitement, swing into the sunshine with joy and erupt with anger. *The Way I Feel* is designed to help children identify, understand and express their emotions. Every element of each page—text, illustration, color and type face—contributes to the mood being conveyed. The superbly crafted verses are sensitive and free of bias and slang. Both boys and girls can identify with the characters. *The Way I Feel* presents emotions as a normal part of life. The characters talk about their feelings without blaming anyone for causing feelings such as anger or boredom. Nor do the characters expect other children or adults to help them feel different.



## Safe from the Start Research Findings

The general feeling about the book was that it shows children different feelings that they might not know and recognise. One mother wrote, “My boy had no idea of his feelings. After reading the book he understands a bit more about different feelings”. Another said “It was funny not just by the words but the pictures too; it made you as a reader happy. It made me smile and my children laughed when we read it.” The pictures go well with the story and it is bright and colourful. This book has the appeal for under 4’s that makes them want to listen to or participate in the story. There is an excellent note to parents and teachers that acknowledges how children may feel and how to respond to those feelings. This book is recommended for children in the age range 1-3 years.

## Suggestions for Use:

- Read notes in the back of the book before use
- Can be used by parent with the child
- As you read the book aloud, ask child to make faces appropriate for each emotion. Or make them yourself! Photograph the child as they make each face, and put the pictures up—on the refrigerator door, on the bedroom bulletin board or in the play room — after you’ve labelled each one with the name of an emotion
- Have child draw or paint self-portraits that show different emotions
- Have child draw or paint other children—or you!—demonstrating an emotion
- Compile the pictures into "The Way We Feel," your own book of emotions
- Read *The Way I Feel* at bedtime and ask child when they felt each emotion during the day
- Play "emotion" charades: give *The Way I Feel* to the child and ask them to identify which emotion you're expressing when you make a face
- Ask child what makes them feel joyful, frustrated, proud or any other emotion depicted in the book
- Cover up the text in the book. Ask child to look at the colours and images and identify what feelings are being communicated
- Ask child what colours they would use to show a certain emotion
- Download the "[Expressing Emotions Teaching Plan](http://www.parentingpress.com/activity/wayifeelplan.pdf)" to show child how to communicate feelings with their drawings (<http://www.parentingpress.com/activity/wayifeelplan.pdf>)

## Ruby and the Rubbish Bin

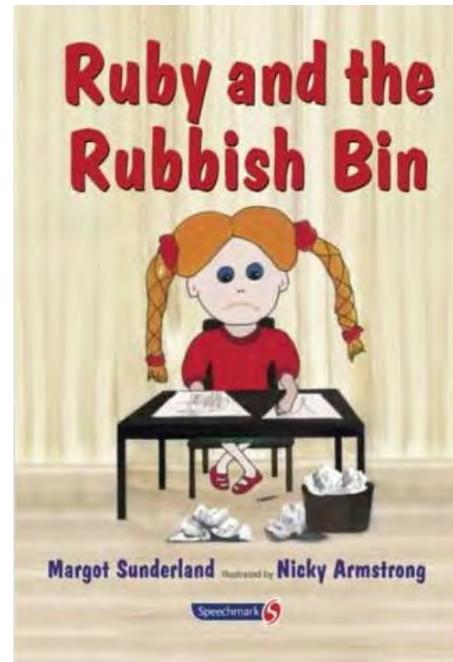
(Margot Sunderland)

**Ages:** 4-12 years

### Product Description

Illustrated storybook to help children who: don't like themselves; have been deeply shamed; have received too much criticism; let people treat them badly; do not accept praise; feel defeated by life; unwanted or unlovable; bully or are bullied; or feel they don't belong. Ruby hates herself so much that she often feels more like a piece of rubbish than a little girl. Children at school bully her. Sometimes Ruby feels so miserable that she wants to sleep and sleep and never wake up again. Then Ruby meets Dot the lunchtime lady who, over time helps Ruby to move from self-hate to self-respect. After a very important dream, and help from Dot, Ruby finds her voice and her anger, and stands up to the bullies. She makes new friends and knows what its like to feel happy for the first time in her life.

This beautifully illustrated book is designed to help children who are troubled in their lives. A powerful book obviously written from the heart.



### Safe from the Start Research Findings

The general feeling about the book was that it is a great book, and a great way to show self-worth. One parent said, "I loved it. I thought it was a great and easy story line for kids." The book portrays a really easy to understand story with a simple message. The language is down to earth and illustrations are fun and clear. The book is beautifully presented. One worker said that after reading this book one mother and child had a joint language; they could say to each other "just like Ruby" and knew what each other meant, and that the mum didn't want to give the book back. This intervention tool is recommended for children in the age group 2-6 years.

### Suggestions for Use:

- There is a guidebook available called Helping Children with Low Self Esteem that gives more tips on using this storybook. It includes what children themselves have said about what it is like for them; how they have coped with the feelings in ways which cause harm to self or others, and the consequences of that, and how they could have coped better
- Provides exercises, tasks and ideas for things to say and do to help children. The exercises and ideas are specifically designed to help a child think about, express and process the feeling to the point of resolution. Many of the exercises offered will support children in finding creative, imaginative and playful ways to communicate their feelings
- Enables child professionals to recognise the unresolved feeling behind the behaviour and to respond correctly to help the child work through that feeling to the point of resolution. Each guidebook focuses on a key feeling and is written in very user-friendly language, covering the most relevant psychotherapeutic and neurobiological theories for that feeling
- Work with the child to resolve a particular issue that may be worrying them, whether it's being a bully, rage, the loss of a loved one or anxiety. The book is an extremely effective communication tool for parents to use with their children

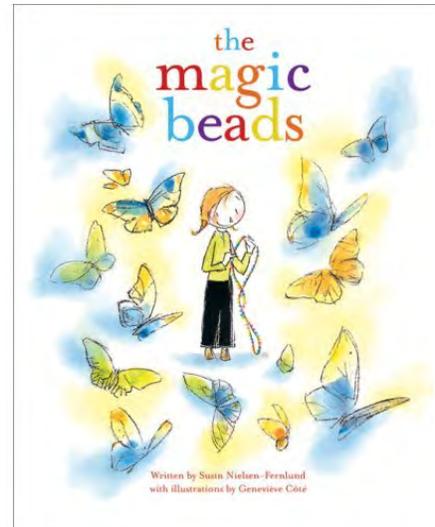
## The Magic Beads

(Susin Nielsen-Fernlund)

**Ages:** 5-9 years

### Product Description

It's seven-year-old Lillian's first day at a new school, and she's got butterflies in her tummy, but those butterflies turn into grasshoppers when she learns she has to bring something for Show and Tell at the end of the week! Lillian and her mother have just moved away from Lillian's abusive father and into a family shelter, leaving behind all of their possessions. Every day that Lillian anxiously watches her classmates bring toys with which she has nothing to compare, the creatures in her stomach change and grow, until finally, she realizes that imagination can make anything magical, even an ordinary string of beads. This book is approachable to young children, while capturing the experience of temporary homelessness in such a powerful way.



### Safe from the Start Research Findings

The general feeling about the book was that it was a wonderful way of explaining the situation of being homeless because of Domestic or Family Violence. Many found that it was a well-presented story that can involve the child, by making their own personal magic necklace. Children found this story very relaxing and could relate to having butterflies in their tummy. One staff participant reported that it was “Really good to read to a child who thinks they have nothing, the child was really interested”. A parent said, “My son loved it, we could relate to it. It was nice for him to know (he was) not the only one who (had) been there and felt like that.” This intervention tool is recommended for children in the age group 3-6 years.

### Suggestions for Use:

- This book could be used to introduce and set up a meaningful ‘show and tell’ program in a playroom
- Help child or parent make up their own set of magic beads
- Encourage the child to make up a story about the beads
- Make up sets of beads for other children or parents
- Explore the concept of “butterflies in your stomach” and talk about the child’s experiences.
- As in the story use the child’s imagination to name animals that matches their feelings. Examine the illustrations in the book. Use contrasting colours to illustrate their stories and chosen animals
- Have child choose their own object to magically turn into something new
- Write a poem with magic words to use during sharing and storytelling

## The Huge Bag of Worries

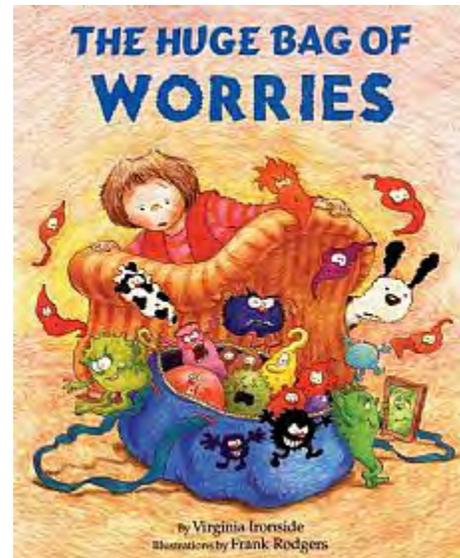
(Virginia Ironside)

**Ages:** 4-8 years

### Product Description

The usually happy Jenny has started to have lots of worries until they grow into a huge bag of worries that follow her everywhere. They are there when she goes swimming, when she is watching TV, and even when she is in the lavatory. Jenny decides they will have to go. But who can help her? Eventually a kind old neighbour helps Jenny open up the bag & sort out all the worries - half of them just disappear because they don't like the light of day, some of them are things that only other people can deal with, and lots of the others are really a lot smaller than Jenny thought!

A funny book to reassure kids who worry - and isn't that all of us? Suitable for a child with the occasional worry and those who have more than one. It encourages the child to share rather than bottle up their worries and problems.



### Safe from the Start Research Findings

The general feeling about the book was that it helps to show children that sharing what is worrying them is ok, and that things can be fixed. It uses everyday examples very well, to which children can relate well. The book helps children who are reluctant to talk about their own worries to open up more, as they can identify with the girl in the book. One child aged 4 made a bag of worries with his worker to go with the book. Feelings as well as worries and thoughts went in the bag. Another child drew her worries during the week between visits. The book is good for boys to address that they do have worries. One mum said "I need to read this – this is good for me". This intervention tool is recommended for children in the age group 3-6.

### Suggestions for Use:

- Go to this site to find some worksheets that have been developed for use with this book: <http://www.rgfl.org/sis/hugebagofworries.htm>
- This book is also available in an Arabic version using a different character name (Malak)
- Outline different situations and talk about what child might specifically do, using ideas from the book
- Make a worry bag and get the child to write down any worries. Problem solve any worries that find their way into it
- Conduct a relaxation session using taped music/visualisation
- Make up a story about worries i.e. the day the Worries took over

# CARS 'R' US KIT

**Ages:** 3+ years

## Product Description

Cars 'R' Us is built around a fleet of very human-looking cars demonstrating a range of emotions in everyday situations. Bursting with personality and fun, this resource is based on the idea that cars can reflect our nature and the roads we travel whether bumpy or smooth.

Cars 'R' Us is a conversation-building tool that can be used by anyone to explore feelings and set goals. Consisting of 52 Fleet cards, 16 Know Your Vehicle cards, 10 Thinking Bubbles, one journey planner and an Owner's Manual. The *Cars 'R' Us* kit suggests many questions we can use to ensure that we're in the driver's seat of our own car, with a tank full of fuel, a well-tuned engine, an effective map of our journey, and a safe set of tyres.

60 full-colour cards 210mm x 148mm, 10 cards 150mm x 100mm, a comprehensive booklet of suggestions, polypropylene box.



## Safe from the Start Research Findings

The general feeling about the kit was that it was interactive and fun and particularly good for boys. One mum said, "It provided a non-threatening opportunity to discuss feelings. It was an ice breaker to lead into discussions about a number of different events and how my child was feeling." Others said that "Good conversations come from looking at the cards." A staff member reported that a boy who was not into 'stories' played with the car cards, and shared what was happening during his access visits to his father. A mother reported that her son loved the cards but that she could not see how to relate the cards to the topic, and to opening up a serious conversation. Others recommended that only a few cards at a time are used, and that staff members guide parents as to how to use the cards. These cards and stickers are recommended for children in the age group 4-6 years.

## Suggestions for Use:

- There is a great Owner's manual included in the kit that gives lots of useful ways to use the cards and stickers. Read it first!

## Ask questions like:

- What kind of car are you today?
- What am I thinking?
- What am I feeling?
- What can I learn from this?
- What's happening in my body?
- What do I really want?
- Is what I am doing now working?
- What will I do next?



# THE BEARS CARDS & STICKERS

**Ages:** 3+ years

## Product Description

Talking about feelings is one of the cornerstones of emotional literacy. Here are 48 colourful, loveable cartoon characters - happy, sad, confident, afraid, shy, energetic, tired, noisy, caring, grumpy, and... You decide! Use the cards or stickers to help parents and children communicate feelings. There are no words on the cards so this resource is very accessible to young children and people with literacy challenges. These can be used in a myriad of counseling situations and as an icebreaker for groups and meetings.



## Safe from the Start Research Findings

The general feeling about the bear cards and stickers was that they are an excellent tool as they create possibilities for discussions about feelings and allow children to explore their experiences in a safe and supportive environment about what has happened to the family. The stickers are bright and appeal to children. They are a great way to encourage the child to talk about emotions. Children are delighted with their stickers and willingly show differing emotions. The cards are a great icebreaker, but select a few emotions as too many cards overwhelm the child. One worker said, "It was enjoyed by the child, but needs planned activity if being used to address Domestic and Family Violence." Stickers alone will often just be stuck on things without much thought given to them, but if used together with planned activity or discussion they can be great in assisting the child to show how they feel about a range of things. This intervention tool is recommended for children in the age group 1/2-5/6 years+.

## Suggestions for Use:

- There is a great booklet which accompanies the bear card pack with heaps of suggestions for ways to use the cards and stickers. Make sure to read it before using the cards
- Ask child or parent to select a bear that illustrates how they are feeling right now and discuss
- Select cards that show how they often/seldom feel and discuss
- Ask which bears show how they would like to be feeling most of the time
- Ask parent or child if they ever feel several emotions at once. Choose cards to illustrate these mixed emotions. (Good exercise for grief counselling.)
- At the end of the day put out the Bear cards and ask parent or child to choose one to represent a strength they have and one representing something they were working to strengthen. This activity was an opportunity for self-validation and for hope
- Get parent or child to draw pictures of ourselves and decorating them, including the use of The Bears stickers.
- Make fridge magnets using pegs and stickers (stick the stickers on the magnets, then cut the magnets to match the size of the stickers)

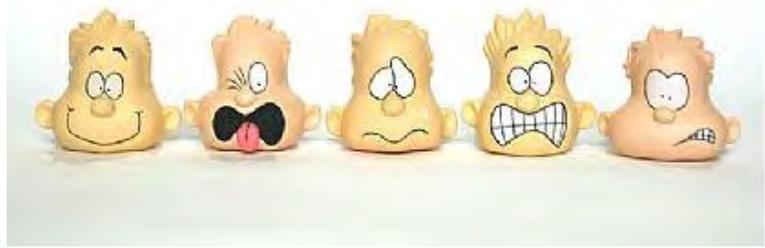


## Mood Dudes Heads

**Ages:** 3+ years

### Product Description

A wonderful tool to use in various settings. Children and adults alike will love to play with these five squeezable faces



displaying a wide range of human emotions. Suggested ones are Happy, Sad, Shocked, Disgusted or Anxious. Put them to work relieving stress. Each Mood Dude is approx 900 x 900mm and made from polyurethane. Not suited for very young children due to safety warning.

### Safe from the Start Research Findings

Participants reported that children were drawn to these and were comfortable using them to represent appropriate people. While clearly human faces, they are not so realistic that they are scary. One worker said, "Good, child had lots of fun. Child also matched face/expression to story characters and then talked about when she had felt the same way". Another worker told how Mood Dudes are good for helping kids identify which Dude is like them ("how they are feeling?"), but that Dudes are not suitable for younger children, a child bit the nose off one dude. The Dudes assist children to express/identify how they feel/felt (and also how they think others were feeling) without having to find the words. As they are squishy the child can use them as a stress release strategy. Participants said "It was good to use something where the staff, mum, and three and four year old could have a laugh together. Laughter is really helpful". Another said, "Helped mum to interact with child – what mum's expression was etc". This intervention tool is recommended for children in the age group 4-6 years.

### Suggestions for Use:

- Use them to identify the child or parent's current emotion and discuss
- Twist them
- Squeeze them
- Roll them at a wall or to each other in a circle

## Baby Dinosaur in Egg Puppet

**Ages:** 6 months +

### Product Description

A scaly baby tyrannosaurus rex puppet pops out of a soft velour egg, ready for action. Many workers are discovering the creative possibilities of using puppets in their work. From childcare to school, foster care to sexual assault counselling, puppets are appearing as a valuable and powerful means of conversation-building and storytelling.



### Safe from the Start Research Findings

The general feeling about the puppet was that you could play all sorts of games to get a child to understand what is going on in their lives from feelings and thoughts to changes that are happening to them in their lives. Children love to interact with this puppet, and think it is great. Participants said, “The kids could show how they felt” and from one mum “We had fun, I don’t often play”. Others found it to help with shy children or ones whose moods change quickly. One staff member found it “cute, engaging, lots of different applications, very interactive. The child I played with it with, and his brothers (7,8,and 9) really liked this. They wanted to keep it. They used it as a tool to express how they felt. It could hide in its shell and face the world.” Others remarked that children were really interested in looking at the puppet. Some workers remarked that some parents were scared to use playthings where there was no framework as to how they should be used, and that some mums had to be shown ideas on how to use the puppet. The puppet is recommended for children in the age group under 1–5/6 years.

### Suggestions for Use:

- Visit this site for some ideas on using the puppet and other puppets available <http://www.folkmanis.com/>
- Arms and mouth can be animated for a variety of expressions
- Great for peek-a-boo games!
- Make up stories about the puppet as the central character to talk about emotions and situations that will or have previously affected the child
- Let the child use the puppet to talk about their emotions or situation
- Make a table top puppet theatre box and put on a display for parent and/or child
- Read a dinosaur story and use the puppet each time the character is mentioned
- Watch the movies of The Land before Time with child/parent and then use puppets to talk about situations from the movies

### Cleaning tips:

DO NOT PUT IN WASHER OR DRYER. Do not submerge the puppet in water. With velour puppets, surface-wash with a sponge, mild detergent and luke-warm water. Do not wring or twist puppet. To dry the puppet, gently squeeze between towels or drip-dry from clothesline. Do not brush the velour puppets.

## Expressions Teaching Mitt

**Ages:** 3+ years

### Product Description

Designed to fit an adult's hand, the mitt is perfect for using with young children and will provide hours of fun. The Expressions Teaching Mitt can help promote discussion about expressions, feelings and emotions. The feelings/emotions featured include: Angry, Happy, Sad, Worried and Surprised. The Expressions Teaching Mitt is made from soft material and measures 23cm high.



### Safe from the Start Research Findings

The general feeling about the puppets was that they were really good for children to pick up a puppet after a bad time and tell what they are feeling. One child who was upset stopped crying when the puppets were used. They are really good to feel and talk about how you feel. One participant said, "Useful – it encouraged discussion, child identified with one "finger" and then talked about when she had also felt like other "fingers"". Others said "The child I was working with was really drawn to it" and "Good to use to start conversations about feelings with children who are able to use their hands to express their feelings. All children really enjoyed these puppets." Another said, "It was good for the mother to see that children found the emotions expressed on the fingers difficult". One worker felt that the puppet has to be used in directed play, by making up a story using the figures to keep it interesting. This worked well with a boy who didn't want to go anywhere near the books. This intervention tool is recommended for children in the age group 3-6 years.

### Suggestions for Use:

- Great for having child in one-on-one time or sitting in a group
- Each mitt comes with a card giving suggestions to encourage discussion and learning
- The mitt has a pocket on the back of the hand to hold some smaller discussion, flash or picture cards

### Suggested Questions:

- Why do you think they have these expressions on their faces?
- What do you think could have happened to make them look the way they do?
- Have you ever felt like any of them? Talk about what it was like and what happened

## 6.4 Conclusion

This chapter has focused on assessing whom the *Safe from the Start* toolkit should be used with, the products in the kit, and our suggestions for their use. A list of the training materials is included in Appendix Four. A training workshop was developed in conjunction with the launch of the kit, and this is discussed in the following chapter.

### The Safe from the Start Kit



# Chapter Seven - The Training Workshops

## 7.1 Introduction

In consultation with the *Safe from the Start* reference groups a training workshop, to accompany the launch of the kit, was developed. The purpose of the training was;

- To raise awareness within the community about the impact of domestic and family violence on young children
- To increase knowledge and understanding of best practice for working with children aged up to six who have experienced domestic or family violence
- To inform the community of the *Safe from the Start* register of intervention activities and therapeutic play which children's workers and parents can use
- To train children's services workers and parents to work with the resources identified

Six workshops were held in major centres across Tasmania. Two were conducted in Hobart (30 June 2008 and 1 July 2008); two in Launceston (7 and 8 July 2008); one in Devonport (16 July 2008) and one in Burnie (15 July 2008). The workshops were presented by a Salvation Army staff member, with a morning session providing a theoretical framework, and an afternoon session demonstrating the resources.

## 7.2 The workshops

The morning session gave a theoretical framework with teaching on:

- Introduction to the *Safe from the Start* Project
- What is Domestic or Family Violence?
- The Impact of Domestic and Family Violence on Children

The afternoon session was designed to demonstrate the *Safe from the Start* kits, with sessions on:

- Best practice for working with children who have experienced domestic or family violence
- The *Safe from the Start* Resource kit
- A closer inspection of the resources

Workers and parents who had not previously undertaken training on the effects of domestic or family violence on children were encouraged to attend the full day of the training workshop. However, those who had undertaken previous training were able to attend lunch and the afternoon session on the use of the resource kit. Participants were reminded at the start of each workshop that what they would hear that day may bring back unhappy memories from their own lives, and that they were welcome to talk to the trainer about this if they wished to.

A total of 137 participants attended the training sessions. These were made up of;

- Hobart 58
- Launceston 13
- Kings Meadows 14
- Burnie 30
- Devonport 22

Twenty-four participants were from women's shelters, twenty-four from child and family support community services, nine from education services, three from Government, and seven from other organisations. Feedback from those attending the training in the *Safe from the Start* Evaluation Report (Guenther and Bell, 2008) was that 92% of training participants were satisfied or very satisfied with the way the training was conducted. The majority of these felt satisfied or very satisfied with the impact of the training on staff knowledge and skills, and satisfied, or very satisfied that the training would make a difference to children.

### **7.3 Conclusion**

Chapters Five to Seven have told the story of the twelve months of the *Safe from the Start* project. The next, final, chapter draws some conclusions about the success of the project, discusses the recommendations of the evaluation report (UTAS, 2006) and discusses what should happen next.

## Chapter Eight – The Evaluation of the Project and What Next?

### 8.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at the findings and recommendations of the evaluation of *Safe from the Start*, and our hopes for the future. At first sight projects such as *Safe from the Start* can appear small and insignificant. However, early intervention projects such as these have the potential to play an important part in maximising social inclusion and in preventing inter-generational exclusion. The project has enabled an opportunity for the nine Tasmanian organisations represented on the Project Reference Group to work collaboratively to have the needs of children, aged up to six, identified and integrated into accommodation programs and case-management. In doing so, the project has brought an important issue to the fore in Tasmania. The collaborative nature of the action research model used for choosing and trialling the resources, and for planning the training workshops, had a very positive capacity building aspect. This was due to the opportunities it presented for partnership working and networking between staff and organisations.

### 8.2 The 'BUBS On Board' infant and mother domestic violence intervention

In addition to the immensely exciting developments of the *Safe from the Start* project, an offshoot project has come about as a result of the extremely positive collaborative work in Tasmania on the *Safe from the Start* project. In conjunction with the Salvation Army Tasmania, five women's shelters within Tasmania and the Royal Children's Hospital Infant Mental Health Section (Victoria), the BUBS on Board Intervention (Building Up Bonds) is currently being trialled. This is a therapeutic group work intervention for infants (up to three years of age) and mothers affected by family violence, and is specifically tailored to infants and mothers accessing women's shelters and emergency housing. Wendy Bunston (Manager of the Addressing Family Violence Programs at the RCH IMHS) visited participating organizations of the *Safe from the Start* project three times between February and August 2008.

The aims of BUBS on Board are twofold:

1. The first is to enhance the affectional bonds between infants and mothers where this has been compromised by their exposure to the trauma of severe family violence
2. The second is to provide 'hands on' training, transferable skills and cultural change around the mental health needs of infants to shelter/refuge staff through the pilot development and delivery of a 'brief intervention' based group work program within the accommodation services themselves

### **8.3 Dissemination of findings from the *Safe from the Start* project**

The *Safe from the Start* project has now almost finished and information about the project has begun to be disseminated. This has occurred through the training workshops, which are detailed in the previous chapter, and also through the presentation of a conference paper detailing the results of the *Safe from the Start Project* in July 2008 to the European Network of Housing Research Conference in Dublin, Ireland (Spinney, 2008).

### **8.4 Evaluation of the project**

The evaluation was conducted by the University of Tasmania, University Department of Rural Health. The evaluators considered the development of activities, particularly in terms of the resource kit developed and the training that ensued from the action research process that formed the early part of the Project. *Safe from the Start* itself aimed to identify key elements of best practice for working with children aged up to six affected by family violence; identify effective assessment tools; identify, and form a register of intervention activities and therapeutic play which children's workers and parents can use; and train children's service workers to work with the resources researched and developed. The evaluation confirmed that all these aims were achieved.

Within the frame of the Project's activities, the evaluation aimed to show:

- What 'quality' resources for use as intervention tools for work with children in this context look like
- How the resources work
- How the capacity of crisis accommodation workers can be most effectively built to meet the needs of children in these situations
- How effective this program is in raising awareness of the needs of children exposed to domestic violence.

Quality resources were described in terms of: a) a soft entry point or way of opening up a conversation with a child; b) a way of being able help children express feelings through a non-confrontational medium; and c) children being able to identify with story characters or being able to project feelings onto a toy in a tactile way. In terms of how the resources work, while the toolkit was recognised for its direct application to shelters and other domestic violence support services as a means of engaging children and allowing them to explore their experiences in a safe and supportive environment, and supporting parents to do the same, as was originally intended by the Project, a number of other potential uses and contexts were identified. These included: a) use in child care centres and early learning settings as a tool to help identify signs of abuse; b) inclusion of the toolkit as part of a library for parents and staff; c) use in non-Domestic Violence related situations, for example where children were identified with self-esteem issues; and d) forming part of a package of resources to support men seeking help with behaviour change.

The Project's capacity building impact is, in part, determined by the numbers of people involved, particularly in the training, which saw more than 120 people participate from across the state. However, in qualitative terms, the Project contributed to increases in skills and knowledge among all Project participants, and perhaps more importantly, it produced a highly effective collaborative learning environment. Respondents reported an increased awareness of resources and understanding of the issues related to the impact of domestic violence on children. The impact at a community level is less clear. The evaluators have made nine recommendations related to a) resources and training appropriate for the context; b) sustainability; c) a model for expansion and extension; d) raising community awareness; and e) future evaluation strategies.<sup>2</sup>

The evaluation report has been published as GUENTHER, J; BELL, E, 2008 *Safe from the Start* Evaluation Report, UTAS, and is available from the Salvation Army Tasmania.

## 8.5 Evaluation recommendations

The training was seen as a great opportunity by many participants to learn new knowledge and skills in relation to work with children. One particular aspect that piqued considerable interest in the training sessions was the topic of brain development. Some training participants, particularly those not working in the domestic violence field, expressed a desire to learn more about this topic and more generally how they could better work with children. A suggested further reading list is contained within this report.

Recommendation 1: It is recommended that, should the resource kit be applied to other language and cultural contexts, more research should be carried out to assess what is appropriate for these groups.

Recommendation 2: Further to Recommendation one, it is recommended that with future revisions of the resource kit materials, that the distinctive concept and understanding of the term 'family violence' in Indigenous contexts be clearly specified in the resource literature.

Recommendation 3: With a view to engaging men as part of the solution to the problem of domestic violence (which the resource kit partially addresses), it is recommended that The Salvation Army Tasmania seek funding to conduct further research into: a) ways that the information contained in the training can be adapted to suit a male audience; b) ways of engaging fathers in the use of these and possibly other resources; c) redressing gender biases in the family services and child protection industry sector.

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<sup>2</sup> This section is largely taken from the evaluation report itself, and the evaluation authors help and assistance is acknowledged with thanks.

- Recommendation 4: It is recommended that in order to extend the reach of the kit beyond the life of the Project, a web site be created that includes: a) details of the resources chosen; b) how to order the resources; c) the resource kit manual including the tips and hints for use; and d) links to further information provided in the training manual.
- Recommendation 5: Further to Recommendation 4, it is recommended that The Salvation Army Tasmania allocate the task of updating the web site and resource list to an existing employee with existing knowledge of domestic violence and work with children.
- Recommendation 6: As part of the role identified in Recommendation 5, it is recommended that The Salvation Army Tasmania identify places where the resource kit could be publicly accessible—if not made publicly available—and pursue the purchase of kits for these places.
- Recommendation 7: In the light of the success of the action research process employed in the Project—and the collaborative learning that ensued—it is recommended that any extension or expansion of the Project should incorporate collaborative processes that promote shared learning and discovery.
- Recommendation 8: While raising community awareness of the impact of domestic violence on children is a worthy goal, if the Project is to be extended, it is recommended that a different set of activities be developed to achieve this. These activities might include: a) media strategies; b) broader targeting of associated training activities; c) engagement of a broader group of stakeholders.
- Recommendation 9: To better help the Project team focus on outcomes, it is recommended that Program Logic assumptions be used to identify a set of anticipated outcomes and indicators.

The Salvation Army Tasmania is grateful to the Evaluators for their work and accepts their recommendations.

## **8.6 Our recommendations**

Following the publication of the *Safe from the Start* Evaluation Report (Guenther and Bell, 2008), there is the intention to bid for funding to enable similar trials to be carried out nationally, with each State having a kit devised for their particular needs in terms of cultural heritage and appropriateness through a similar trialing process.

Following feedback from the *Safe from the Start* workshops, it is **Recommended** that additional funding become available to run additional training workshops in more remote areas of Tasmania, and that this funding include monies for producing a DVD on the use of the Kit materials. It is also **Recommended** that the training should be opened up to new groups, such as child protection workers.

It is too early to know the extent to which the *Safe from the Start* kits will be effective in ameliorating some of the damage done to children made homeless by domestic or family violence. What is known, is that tackling the complex disadvantages faced by this specific group is important for not only them but for wider society. At first sight projects such as *Safe from the Start* can appear small and insignificant. However, early intervention projects such as these have the potential to play an important part in maximising social inclusion and in preventing inter-generational exclusion. It is **Recommended** that an evaluation of the use of the *Safe from the Start* kit resources is conducted within the next 12 months. The kits are only just beginning to be used, following the training workshops on their use conducted in June and July 2008. The evaluation of the project covered the process of deciding which products should go in the kits, and the training process, but not the use of the kits themselves.

The project has enabled an opportunity for the nine Tasmanian organisations represented on the Project Reference Group to work collaboratively to have the needs of children, aged up to six, identified and integrated into accommodation programs and case-management. In doing so, the project has brought an important issue to the fore in Tasmania. The collaborative nature of the action research model used for choosing and trialling the resources, and for planning the training workshops, had a very positive capacity building aspect because it presented opportunities for partnership working and networking between staff and organisations. Following the publication of the *Safe from the Start* Evaluation Report (Guenther and Bell, 2008), it is Recommended that funding be made available to enable similar trials to be carried out nationally, with each State having a kit devised for their particular needs in terms of cultural heritage and appropriateness through similar trialing process.

## **8.7 Final conclusions**

This report has documented the processes and findings of *Safe From The Start*, a project managed and coordinated by The Salvation Army Tasmania. The project has raised awareness of how experiencing domestic and family violence affects children, and has produced a selection of toys, books and puppets that frontline workers and mothers can use to allow children to safely explore their experiences. A training workshop has also been delivered around Tasmania to further raise awareness of the issues, and increase confidence in using the products. Much of that information is also given in this report, and it is not necessary to attend the training in order to use the *Safe from the Start* kit. The production of the materials into one easily accessed package of books, playthings and information means that this difficult but unavoidable issue has become easier to tackle for parents and frontline workers.

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## APPENDIX ONE



### ***Safe from the Start***

#### TRIALLING OF MATERIALS ORGANISATION SIGN UP SHEET

Name of Organisation .....

We agree to trial intervention tools being considered for the *SAFE FROM THE START* toolkit, and to facilitate the trialling of the materials by parents and other suitable stakeholders.

This will involve:

1. A survey of parents of children who have experienced domestic and family violence, and also of children and support workers who will use the materials.
2. Posters will be put up in participating organizations telling clients of the study, and inviting them to contact a named staff member if they wish to participate. Staff members will also make direct contact with clients about the possibility of them participating in the data collection. The prime contact (see 4 below) will also arrange for staff members to trial the materials and to take part in the research.
3. All participants (parents and staff members) will sign the consent form, and will be given the information sheet about the study. This will reinforce that if they wish to withdraw from taking part they can do so at any time. Participating clients of services will agree to try out (or to allowing their children's worker to try out) the use of an intervention tool that might help the child to come to terms with the domestic or family violence that they have experienced. Clients will then complete a questionnaire with a staff member on their thoughts and opinions on the effectiveness of the product. Staff members who trial the products will also complete a questionnaire, and will also have a semi-structured interview with Angela Spinney, the *SAFE FROM THE START* Research Project Officer.

4. A prime contact will be available within the organization who will have responsibility for the research and for coordinating with the *SAFE FROM THE START* Research Project Officer – Angela Spinney:
  
5. Name of Prime Contact.....
  
6. The questionnaires will be administered by the prime contact within the organization, who will go through the information sheet and consent form with participants and complete the questionnaire with client participants (or arrange for other staff members to do so). A training session will be held with the *SAFE FROM THE START* Research Project Officer (Angela Spinney) before this takes place.
  
7. The trialing of the intervention materials will take place after the information gathered from the piloting process is available. The timetable of the process is therefore as follows:
  - 14-25 January 2008 piloting of trialing process
  - 1 February – 7<sup>th</sup> March 2008 full scale trialing of materials by participating organisations
  - 11-20<sup>th</sup> March 2008 Angela Spinney to interview Children’s and Support Workers participating in the study, collect and analyse questionnaires.
  - 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008 – results available.

**Signature of Agreeing Officer.....**

**Date of signature.....**

## APPENDIX TWO



### ***Safe from the Start***

Level 1, 250 Liverpool Street, Hobart, Tasmania, 7000. Telephone: 0448138208

Email: [angela.spinney@aus.salvationarmy.org](mailto:angela.spinney@aus.salvationarmy.org)

#### **The *Safe from the Start* Trial of Intervention Materials**

#### **INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM**

##### **WHAT IS THE TRIAL ABOUT?**

The trial is designed to help identify and form a register of intervention activities and therapeutic play (such as a book or play thing) which children's workers and parents can use for working with children aged up to six who have experienced domestic or family violence.

We will be trialing a number of different products in a number of different shelters, refuges, and other organizations to find out what are the most effective tools available for children who have experienced domestic or family violence.

After this, a "*Safe from the Start*" toolkit will be put together of books and toys that the trial has shown is felt by parents, and workers, to be the most effective for young children who have experienced domestic and family violence. A training program will be designed and used in refuges and other agencies on the best ways to use the products you have identified as beneficial.

##### **WHO HAS COMMISSIONED THE *SAFE FROM THE START* PROJECT?**

The Commonwealth Government Office for Women has commissioned the *Safe from the Start* project, as part of the Domestic and Family Violence and Sexual Assault Initiative 2007/8.

##### **WHAT WILL YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THE TRIAL INVOLVE?**

- Taking part in the study will involve you trying out (or you allowing your children's worker to try out) the use of a simple intervention tool (such as a book or play thing suitable for your child's age group) that might help them to come to terms with the situation they have experienced.

- You will then complete a questionnaire (with a staff member) on your thoughts and opinions on the effectiveness of the book or toy that was used with your child. The questionnaire will take about 15 minutes to complete. You will be free to withdraw your participation at any point and withdraw from the study with no questions asked. Your children's worker will also be asked to fill in a questionnaire about your child's response to the book or toy. Again, if you do not wish this to be recorded you can withdraw your permission for the children's worker to do this at any time.
- Any information you give will be treated in confidence. No one except your service provider will know that you took part in the study and all the questionnaires will be anonymised (that is, no-one will be able to trace who has said what). Those who do decide to take part will be asked to complete a consent form. The consent forms will not be kept with the questionnaires and no one will be able to trace your responses.
- If you decide not to take part in the *Safe from the Start* Project it will have absolutely no impact on the accommodation, or other service, that you receive from the agencies that are involved in the *Safe from the Start* project.

#### **WHAT ARE THE TIMESCALES FOR THE TRIAL?**

- During February and March 2008 we will be trialing a number of different products in a number of different shelters and other organizations to find out what are the most effective tools available for children who have experienced domestic or family violence.
- You will be more than welcome to have a copy of any reports or articles about the results of the study if you wish to. We will also be happy to discuss the result with you.

#### **MORE INFORMATION:**

If you would like more information about the *Safe from the Start* project, or have any questions, you can contact Angela Spinney, the *Safe from the Start* Research Project Officer on 0448 138 209, or you can email her on [angela.spinney@aus.salvationarmy.org](mailto:angela.spinney@aus.salvationarmy.org).

**Taking part in the *Safe from the Start* Trial of Intervention Materials is entirely voluntary and you may choose whether or not to take part, or to drop out at any time. If you are happy with the information given here and wish to take part please sign the consent form below.**

**I HAVE HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS THE TRIAL WITH A WORKER AND ALL MY QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN ANSWERED TO MY SATISFACTION. I HAVE VOLUNTARILY DECIDED TO TAKE PART IN THE *SAFE FROM THE START* TRIAL OF INTERVENTION MATERIALS.**

*Parents Signature..... Date.....*

*Name .....*

*Signature of Agency Worker.....*

Please keep a copy of this information and consent form

## APPENDIX THREE



### ***Safe from the Start***

Level 1, 250 Liverpool Street, Hobart, Tasmania, 7000. Telephone: 0448138208

Email: [angela.spinney@aus.salvationarmy.org](mailto:angela.spinney@aus.salvationarmy.org)

#### QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you for taking part in the *Safe from the Start* trial, which is designed to help identify and form a register of intervention activities and therapeutic play (such as a book or play thing) which children's workers and parents can use for working with children aged up to six who have experienced domestic or family violence.

We are trialing a number of different products in a number of different shelters, refuges, and other organizations, to find out what are the most effective tools available for children who have experienced domestic or family violence.

After this, a "*Safe from the Start*" toolkit will be put together of books and toys that the trial has shown is felt by parents, and workers, to be the most effective for young children who have experienced domestic and family violence. A training program will be designed and used in refuges and other agencies on the best ways to use the products you have identified as beneficial.

As you know, taking part in the study has involved you trying out (or you allowing your children's worker to try out) the use of a simple intervention tool (such as a book or play thing suitable for your child's age group) that might help them to come to terms with the domestic or family violence that they have experienced.

You will now complete a questionnaire (with a staff member) on your thoughts and opinions on the effectiveness of the book or toy that was used with your child. The questionnaire will take about 15 minutes to complete. You will be free to withdraw your participation at any point and withdraw from the study with no questions asked. Your children's worker will also be asked to fill in a questionnaire about your child's response to the book or toy. Again, if you do not wish this to be recorded you can withdraw your permission for the children's worker to do this at any time.

NAME OF INTERVENTION TOOL TRIALLED.....

**1. How good do think that this book/play thing would be for young children who have experienced domestic or family violence?**

Please circle one answer      a) Excellent      b) Good      c) Reasonable      d) Poor

**2. How good do you think that this book/plaything would be in helping a young child to know that they are not the only ones who have experienced family and domestic violence?**

Please circle one answer      a) Excellent      b) Good      c) Reasonable      d) Poor

**3. How good do you think that this book/plaything would be in helping a young child to feel better?**

Please circle one answer      a) Excellent      b) Good      c) Reasonable      d) Poor

**4. Who do you think should use this intervention tool with young children?**

Please circle one answer      a) Parent      b) Staff      c) Both      d) No one

**5. How good do you think that this book/plaything would be in assisting a parent and child to have a conversation about the experiences they have been through?**

Please circle one answer      a) Excellent      b) Good      c) Reasonable      d) Poor

**6. Would you recommend this intervention tool to others to use?**

Please circle one answer      a) Yes      b) No

**7. If you would recommend this intervention tool, what age group do you think this book is suitable for?**

Please circle one or more answers

- |                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| a) Under One year old     | d) Three to Four years old               |
| b) One to Two years old   | e) Four to Five years old                |
| c) Two to Three years old | f) Five to Six years old                 |
|                           | g) Would not recommend for any age group |

**8. How effective is this book in assisting a parent and child who have experienced domestic and family violence to come to terms with what has happened to them?**

Please circle one answer

- a) Excellent      b) Good      c) Reasonable      d) Poor

**9. Do you think that the product is suitable to be used more than once with the same child?**

Please circle one answer

- a) Yes      b) No

**10. Would you mind telling me a couple of sentences what was your general feeling about the book?**

**11. What makes you say this?**

**12. What mark out of 10 would you give this book/plaything?**

(1 being the lowest score, and 10 the highest)

**THANK YOU!!**

## APPENDIX FOUR

### **The *Safe from the Start* Resource Kit**

1. **I Saw it Happen (Denton, W), 1998**
2. **A New House for Smudge, (2001)**
3. **When I Feel Sad (Way I feel Books), (Spelman, C)**
4. **When I Feel Angry (Way I feel Books), (Spelman, C)**
5. **Tell me a story mummy (Norac), 2007**
6. **The Blue Day Book for Kids: A Lesson in cheering yourself up (Greive)**
7. **A Terrible Thing Happened (Holmes), 2002**
8. **The Huge Bag of Worries, (Ironside), Holder Children's Books, 1996, Amazon,**
9. **Is it Right to Fight? A first look at anger, (Thomas), Holder Children's Books, 2003**
10. **Ruby and the Rubbish Bin (Sunderland), 2003, Speechmark**
11. **The Way I feel (Cain), 2005, Parenting Press**
12. **Playsongs/CD: Action songs and rhymes for Babies and Toddlers, (Roberts), A**
13. **Cars 'R' Us Kit and Stickers , St Lukes**
14. **Baby Dinosaur in Egg Puppet**
15. **Mood Dudes**
16. **The Wrong Stone, (Dewy. R), 2002**
17. **The Magic Beads, 2007**
18. **It's Just Different Now (Espie), 1999**
19. **Faces Glove (Expressions Teaching Mitt)**
20. **The Bears Cards and Stickers, St Lukes**
21. **Grumpy Gracie (Lloyd) 2005**
22. **When I feel Scared (Spelman, C)**