

Child Protection & Survival Efforts by the Adult Victim of Domestic Violence

Most battered women actively try to protect their children from violence by the batterer. Common strategies include:

- fighting back and defying the perpetrator,
- pleasing and placating the perpetrator, complying with his demands,
- not telling anyone about the violence for fear of making things worse,
- not leaving for fear of making things worse,
- leaving to try to make things better,
- avoiding the perpetrator, i.e., working separate shifts,
- protecting the children by sending them away,
- searching for help, i.e., getting a protection order, going to a shelter, trying to find help for the perpetrator,
- dropping the search for help as a way to protect herself,
- being “devious” as a way to survive, i.e., lying to the perpetrator and others,
- encouraging the perpetrator to drink so he’ll pass out and not hurt anyone,
- reasoning with the perpetrator and expressing disapproval of his behavior,
- trying to improve the relationship,
- creating an internal space through fantasies that the perpetrator cannot touch,
- having sex to placate the perpetrator and protect the children from violence,
- drinking and using drugs to numb her own pain, and
- lying about the perpetrator’s criminal activity or child abuse so that he will not harm the victim or the children.

Note: Many service agencies have come to believe that the most effective way to protect the children is to protect and support the non-offending parent.